

THE ARMENIANS IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD

PARADIGMS OF INTERACTION
SEVENTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURIES



Volume Three Medieval Cosmopolitanism and Images of Islam
Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries

SETA B. DADOYAN

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I dedicate this book to my family, Arsen, Talin, and Daniel,
and to my ancestors,
the Barsoumians from the east and the Yaylayans
from the west of the Armenian World

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ا	ā	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ث	ṯ
ث	th	ج	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	ū
ش	sh	ي	ī
ص	ṣ	ع	ʿ
ض	ḍ		

Hübschmann-Meillet Transliteration

Hübschmann- Meillet	Sound: East. Arm/West. Arm	Armenian Letter
------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------

a	a	u
b	b/p	p
g	g/k (as in Gabriel/Ken)	q
d	d/t	ṇ
e	ye/ye (as in yard)	ḷ
z	z (as in <u>z</u> inc)	q
ē	e (as in <u>a</u> ir)	ḷ
ě	e (as in teacher)	ṇ

Hübschmann-Meillet Transliteration

t'	t/t (strong, as in <u>tab</u>)	թ
ž	zh (as in French Jacques)	ժ
i	i/i (as in <u>Kim</u>)	ի
l	l/l (as in <u>label</u>)	լ
x	kh/kh (as in Richter)	խ
c	ts/dz (as in Her <u>z</u> og)	ծ
k	k/g (as in cap/ <u>g</u> oal)	կ
h	h (as in <u>h</u> am)	հ
j	dz/tz (as in Piz <u>z</u> a)	ձ
ł	gh/gh (as in Bag <u>h</u> dad)	ղ
č	ch/j (as in jam)	ճ
m	m/m (as in <u>m</u> ap)	մ
y	h/h (not spelled at the end of words)	յ
n	n/n (as in <u>n</u> ame)	ն
š	sh/sh (as in <u>sh</u> op)	շ
o	o or vo (as in <u>v</u> ortex)	ո
č'	ch/ch (as in <u>ch</u> op)	չ
b	p/b (as in pub/ <u>b</u> ook)	պ
ǰ	dj/ch (as in <u>j</u> ob/ <u>ch</u> op)	ջ
ř	r/r (strong as in <u>R</u> obert)	ր
s	s/s (as in Sam)	ս
v	v/v (as in vault)	վ
t	t/d (as in <u>t</u> ailor/ <u>d</u> oor)	տ
r	r (light as in Turn <u>e</u> r)	ր
c'	ts/ts (as in Her <u>z</u> egovina)	ց
w	u/u (light v used to produce French 'u')	ւ
p'	p/p (strong p as <u>p</u> ass)	փ
k'	k/k (strong k as in <u>k</u> een)	ք
ō	o/o (as in <u>o</u> pen)	օ
f	f/f (as in <u>f</u> ork)	ֆ

Western Armenian proper names of persons are written in the Western Armenian transliteration system, and not the Hübschmann.

Prologue

In order to give the reader of Volume Three and of the other volumes as well a comprehensive idea of the entire work, below are the Prologue, the General Introduction, and the Introductions of all three volumes.

My initiative to study the Armenian experience in the medieval Islamic world through paradigmatic cases of interaction takes its beginnings in the Armenian condition in the Near Eastern region. It is best explained by Nietzsche's dictum *sum ergo cogito*, I exist therefore I think. Existential in many respects, this questioning is also its motive and inner dimension. In this perspective, writing about the history of Armenians in the medieval Islamic world means trying to make sense of their circumstances. It means an effort to create/define, rather, to re-create/re-define the historicity of their experiences. Being Armenian, almost universally, is having a mobile line of ethnic ancestry laden with narratives from the vast historic Armenian *oikoumenē* or habitat from Iran to Constantinople, and from the Caucasus to Egypt. This study reflects, then, a questioning that a minimal level of concern about my Armenological Dasein or my being an Armenologist requires.

The condition of my generation of the 1960s in particular, meant growing up in trilingual and pluricultural communities in ancient cities of mosques, churches, *suks*, local and missionary schools, and eastern/western ideologies and folklores. Above all, it meant carrying heavy baggage of vaguely perceived legacies, while learning/living in local and cosmopolitan networks of relations. However, these and many other factors are not causes for crises as long as one takes the environment as the ground of identity, no matter how compounded and peculiar it is. In other words, the Armenian condition in Near Eastern countries is not problematic in itself; it becomes so when isolated in a small enclosure such as the glass pyramid of the Louvre. Space/time takes the shape of the pyramid as opposed to and separated from outer space and real time. As far as the pyramid is concerned, the narrative

of the classic histories is also a value theory or the “ethics” of being an Armenian. However, in real space/time this “ethics” lacks grounds in lived sensibilities, and epistemological criteria for its credibility. This is when the Armenian condition becomes problematic, the scholarship in the pyramid a parody, and one’s existence an unresolved matter. I existed and still do in these circumstances, therefore I must think, at least to clear the Armenian psyche of sedimentations and fixities.

As of the inception of this work over a decade ago, and throughout, the objective was to create a broad, inclusive, and definitely critical reconstruction of the Armenian condition in the medieval Near East from the advent of Islam to the end of the Mongol period. For its proximity to the lived and recorded experiences, this new analysis of the Armenian condition had to be solid enough to stand out as an aesthetically more realistic, historically more accurate, philosophically more consistent, and intellectually more intriguing account. For a task of these requirements, the key was to identify the problematic aspects of the traditional narratives and constructs in circulation for centuries. I did not have to go too far or search too long to find episodes and texts that were paradigm cases for a different historicity, even for a counter-history.

Contrary to mainstream accounts, Armenian history is far from being monolithic. Several and often contradictory trends went into its making, yet the images in the narratives failed to reflect its rich texture and dynamics. Armenian–Islamic history—as a case study—was just one way of dealing with this problem. Also, the objective of my interest in the so-called sects is to draw the historicity of Armenian dissidence and what may be termed as revolutionary elements on all strata and phases. The initiative to see these elements as a part of the whole is novel and for some, even controversial. Surely, the book is not about interactions through dissident channels but dissidence was a channel of interaction. Also, the book does not focus on the dissident aspects of Armenian history, because that would betray its holistic logic. The same can be said about the so-far marginalized question of Muslim Armenians. Their case is not a highlight; rather, it is just part of the general argument to look at Armenian history from as many perspectives as possible. Several other subjects in the book, in turn discovered or brought up for the first time, demonstrate the multidimensional and interactive nature of the Armenian experience in the medieval Islamic and wider world. Things could have been—as they in fact were—very different than imagined, desired, and told in traditional narratives. This

is as much a historical as a deeply existential and epistemological issue, which is central to a project as ambitious as this book.

I began pondering over the extraordinary channels of interaction and their significance in Armenian history many years ago. I was a graduate student majoring in philosophy when I discovered that an obscure thirteenth-century Armenian manuscript was in fact a summary of the esoteric Epistles of the Brethren of Purity of the tenth century. The broader project matured over a long period because I was venturing into uncharted territory. There were no studies and the task was not only hard, multifaceted, dangerous, but also challenging and overdue. The tools were an interdisciplinary training, a critical approach, and a taste for dialectics. After two decades of research and the publication of two books and several papers on the theme of Armenians and Islam, the opus came together as an “argument” based on and structured by hitherto unnoticed or marginalized paradigm cases. Each one of these cases raised new questions and revealed new patterns of interaction and evolution in the medieval Near East.

The new knowledge that I excavated will hopefully lead to fresh ways and areas of inquiry in Near Eastern as well as Armenian studies. In its intent and rather unconventional content, this book is also a prolegomenon to writing Armenian history in the context of the Near East and to review things Near Eastern in their interactive aspects. It is supposed to suggest new outlooks and re-assessments in Islamic histories as well. At this point, few notes about the sources and the structure or the aesthetics of the book are in order. The selection and use of sources were based on the necessities of the initial objectives, as stated earlier. Essential was the arrangement of a very large amount of data for a composition which, by its making, presented a new account of things Armenian as things Near Eastern. In the case of Armenian sources, in addition to contemporary sources, the focus was on primary sources. In the case of Arab sources, naturally all basic primary sources and texts were utilized. In fact, most of the arguments and narratives are based precisely on their testimony. In all detailed narratives, and there are many, the objective was to draw a general context for the reader to understand and have a feel of the period and the argument/s. The sources were selected in this light. Therefore, to keep the framework straightforward—especially for the reader who is not familiar with Armenian and/or Islamic history—I avoided debates on specific issues. This is not a detective’s initiative or report, and I am well aware of what some call “scholarship out there.” I also deliberately avoided

unnecessary bibliographic “embellishment,” if the material did not contribute to or was not actually used in the work. Already a very long and complicated text of many strands of arguments, this book could not carry parallel tracks of information. Nevertheless, I have intentionally made use of certain details and ideas of relatively old sources such as Gibbon. This was to highlight a point, sometimes humorously, or open different channels of thought/imagination for the reader. After all, similar to all writing and reading, historical writing too is an aesthetic activity even when it focuses on critical thinking and analysis.

Since making causal connections was essential to the process of deriving and drawing the historicity of otherwise isolated and/or undetected paradigm cases or trends over seven centuries, the sequence of the episodes was an essential part of building the arguments. A chronological approach was the most appropriate means to construct the blocks and arrange the paradigms in the clearest possible composition. A thematic classification would have not only been confusing but would have also seriously impaired the conceptual structure of the work. A comment must be made about the multiplicity of themes and the content. The great range of interrelated themes may have justified a single and very large volume. It would have been architecturally more coherent, but the sequence and content of six parts made the division to three volumes so much more accessible and practical. The reader, however, should read the volumes as parts of a whole. Essential for me was the shaping and illustrating, or grounding of, arguments through paradigmatic cases. From the Prologue of Volume One to the end of Volume Three, a central argument and corollaries bridge the various episodes and issues. The style in organizing the text and the problem of details must be commented on too. In view of my dialectical–holistic approach and the objectives and the nature of the study, I did not and could not implement the common technique of maintaining a flowing narrative, keeping the details in the footnotes. Personally, I do not particularly enjoy reading texts of this style and, in turn, avoid imposing double levels of attention on the reader. The details are not just for information and evidence, as most traditionally trained historians take them to be. Details are a part of the story and the argument/s and if they have no relevance to the central themes, they must be excluded. As in Flemish and much later photo-realist arts, the fine details are *trompe l'oeil* elements to draw the viewer/reader into the “reality” of the work. In other words, these details are necessary, not just as evidence, but also to assist the viewer/reader to try to think from within the narrative.

Indeed, I write as Chuck Close paints his very large portraits. The fine hair and minutest details on a face are not information; Matisse could tell a big tale with two or three strokes of the brush or with charcoal. Details are elements in a symphonic interaction with the image that is a construction or a composition anyway. This is my style of writing history and naturally it is shaped by the idea of the opus. Every piece of literature—including and especially a historical writing—is an artifact of sorts. It is a composition of many elements arranged in deliberate forms, order, sequence, proportion, dimension, detail, highlight, intensity, lines, colors, etc. As in the arts too, seemingly odd elements contribute to the making of the whole. Even though in a good piece of literature and art too, form, content, and subject are ideally one, form is always the key to the latter. I have composed and arranged the larger subjects and their subthemes in such a way as to create an open yet dynamic historic continuity that is closer to the Armenian condition and, as such, more intriguing. By its intent, form, and content the book will hopefully stimulate a process of reevaluating everything, including itself, and reconceptualizing Armenian and Near Eastern histories.

General Introduction

Armenian Historiography and the Book as an Argument

Broader in scope and interdisciplinary in approach, this is not a book of history in the traditional sense; rather, it strongly suggests a different historical reading and thinking exercise. In form and content, this study in three volumes is written as an argument for, and a prolegomenon to, writing Armenian history in the Near Eastern context.

My main argument is: If, since the seventh-century, historic Armenia, from Asia Minor to the South Caucasus, including the modern Armenian Republic, have been part of the Islamic world, and if, until a few decades ago, the entire region, from the Black and Caspian seas to the Mediterranean, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, was the habitat of most of the Armenians, their history too was naturally a part of these locations and peoples. Armenians lived there as integral elements and their world was governed by more or less the same laws that governed the region. In elementary Newtonian terms, the law that makes the apple fall is the same that keeps the moon in orbit. In other words, since history has no secret pockets and private laws, things Armenian are also things Near Eastern, and must be studied as such. This has not been the case and this is where this study takes its urgency and legitimacy.

In line with the initial argument, the re-conceptualization of the medieval Armenian experience within the context of cultural and political Islam is an immediate task. The ultimate aim is to draw the outlines of a new philosophy of Armenian history based on hitherto undetected or obscured patterns of interaction. Keeping the general chronology of events from the fourth to the end of the fourteenth century as the background, the various themes in the three volumes are paradigm cases of interaction on political, cultural, religious, philosophical, literary, and even artistic levels. Surely, this is not a Socratic quest for the truth, but the exercise will at least clear sedimentations in historical writing.

The focus on the ongoing Armenian experience as part of the Near Eastern world will overcome an inherent Armenocentrism, which has inevitably created a dualism in Armenian historical writing. This is looking at all things Armenian as central and everything else peripheral. There is need for a Copernican step, which will shift this center from the Armenian into the Near Eastern universe and initiate a comprehensive project of re-evaluating the narratives. As various camps in Armenian studies discern and occasionally debate differences in perspective, interest, methodology, and objectives, Armenian historians are gradually becoming more self-conscious and less Armenocentric. But there are still accumulated narratives and accounts that will have to be reviewed. The task demands a fusion of the disciplines of historiography, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, critical theories, psychology, linguistics, literature, arts, and many more. Surely, how various Armenologists think depends on their backgrounds and roles; but despite the recent proliferation of Armenian studies centers, institutional bias and politicization still seriously threaten to derail a process of critical reflection. The critical and interdisciplinary approach adopted in this book looks at the Armenological market place, so to speak, from a phenomenological distance. The so-called objectivity claimed by some historians is problematic. Absolute objectivity in history is a myth. There is always a transcendental and a priori grid of historical thinking, which precedes all types of writing. This grid may be an ideology, an agenda, or some other consideration. As is the case now, Armenian studies are and have always been embedded in cultural-political traditions. During the recent decades, several academics deliberately borrowed the beliefs and agendas of dominant institutions and political parties. Many drifted along believing that they were doing what they were expected to do as “authentic” Armenologists, such as concentrating on the later modern period and the Genocide. Heideggerian authenticity does not very much apply here. However, beyond these practices, to be an authentic scholar probably means to face up to one’s responsibility for what one’s career in Armenian studies adds up to.

Today, in the aftermath of the postmodern critique of historical writing, we can see that strictly conservative approaches seriously disrupted the discipline of Armenian history. The scholarship and the discipline of Armenian studies in general face serious problems, such as cultural traffic lights and institutional validations. Furthermore, in my opinion, among Armenians there has always been a deeply rooted and strong culture of authority. This is a tendency to fix authority in all

matters, even those of opinion. Once a subject or a figure and episode from any field manage, or are chosen, to gain the status of authority, they become references and the general public turns into an impenetrable wall around them. The victims of this tradition have always been the intellectual culture and the public itself. For many Armenians, the seeming security provided by authority has had priority, and it has become almost impossible to break through and open all things Armenian to all other things. Furthermore, the institutional infrastructure of the Armenian environment still does not allow the development of a culture of experimentation and critical thinking.

At present, everyone admits that primarily Armenian sources and interpretations may not and did not provide thorough accounts. Similar to Syriac and Byzantine sources, Arab sources are absolutely essential. Language cannot be the reason for shortcomings as well as success in using these sources. The causes are in the politics of Armenian intellectual culture to safeguard the classical framework and some foundational concepts. Surely there are several exceptions, as the reader will find throughout this work. The point is that the Armenian experience in the medieval Near East is too diverse and complicated to respond to simplistic and quasi-epic constructs. Indeed, it is very difficult to trace a constant line of Armenian policy, ideology, or strategy, except mobility and flexibility in the different communities and places that sustained the continuity of the whole for centuries. Consequently, Armenian histories should reflect this condition and avoid essentialism. One of the oldest surviving pre-modern nations of their region, Armenians lived on its entire surface and beyond, closely interacting with peoples and their cultures. More importantly, the Armenian habitat extended from the historic land into the whole region and beyond, into Europe and recently the Americas. The patterns of cultural–political experiences were highly interactive, decentralized, and multidimensional. The communities everywhere evolved by the requirements of their habitats. Many episodes in medieval and modern Armenian history—mostly unstudied or thrown into oblivion—indicate to unexpected manners of interaction with, and at times manipulation of, the environment by Armenian individuals and factions. In fact, there exists a vast area of Armenian–Islamic *realpolitik* with Arabs, Turks, Persians, Kurds, as well as heterodox Islam (such as Ismā‘ilism).

During the Soviet era the institutes and/or departments of oriental studies (*arewelagit’iwn*) in the Republic lumped together some modern Middle Eastern research under the headings of the “brotherly

relations between the peoples of the region” or “liberation struggles of the peasant and proletarian classes” in Arab countries. A more banal and folkloric category is “the contribution of Armenians to the social-cultural development” of a given country/period. Otherwise Armenian–Islamic interactions of fourteen centuries, the subject of this book, remain untouched. In scale and breadth, and perhaps for the first time, this study initiates Islamic–Armenian studies as a new area in Near Eastern studies. Every phase of Armenian political and cultural development therefore can only be understood in context and by contemporary tools. In turn, medieval Armenian history after the mid-seventh century can only be understood in the context of the Islamic world. This has not been the case. Any change in this situation will require a radical transformation in the way intellectuals think of themselves and their subject matter. Scholars in social sciences and humanities will have to develop a practice of thinking the unthinkable, of looking beyond the deep-seated presuppositions of what conventionally and almost naturally “passed for the truth,” as Nietzsche would put it. Traditional dichotomies between disciplines are now abandoned by many in favor of the “deployment of a battery of techniques and insights from linguistics, literature, psychoanalysis, philosophy, history, and art criticism.”¹

I strongly believe that the historian is primarily an interpreter and that history is not an exclusive discipline, as traditional historians still hold. It is through a process of conceptualization that all sorts of elements are transformed into so-called historical texts. This is a very intriguing and dangerous process. Historical narratives may create seemingly detailed accounts² that can be marketed as “facts,” and different narratives by different writers may give contradictory images as “facts.” In Armenian medieval histories, for example, it is very common to find elaborate yet contradictory reconstructions of the same episode. This is the nature of historical writing, it has always suffered from epistemological flaws and the historian must be aware of his/her predicament. In another respect, the inspirational value of history can/should never be underestimated. It has priority for many. We also know that “inspirational” histories are also designed to achieve certain political objectives. As Lyotard says, narrative is “a kind of self-legitimization whereby constructing it according to a certain set of socially accepted rules and practices establishes the speaker’s or writer’s authority within their society and acts as a mutual reinforcement of that society’s self-identity.”³

Conceptualizing is the core of writing history and the self-reflexive historian knows that it is possible to offer an interpretation which, although not claiming to be a “true” narrative, may nevertheless be a more plausible account than the existing ones.⁴ The opening up of historical analysis to rhetorical interrogation is at the heart of contemporary thinking, which recognizes no distinction between history proper and the philosophy of history.⁵ Armenian studies scholars are probably aware of this fact. At present, who or what is an Armenologist as an intellectual—a legacy of the Enlightenment—may mean being part of the traditional Armenian politics of truth or a critic of it, being part of the culture industry or its adversary and reformer. Many of the cases discussed in this study are counter-cases and will inevitably cause uncertainties, even hostility. There should be no problem, because “uncertainty in history is a form of protection” against dogmatism, at least.⁶ A radical review of Armenian history in its Near Eastern context is a project for generations of academics. This study is only a first attempt to open and survey a mostly unstudied field with novel methods and identify the problematic aspects and develop the arguments. At the end of each volume, there is an epilogue where the arguments are summarized.

Notes

1. Gordon Graham, *The Shape of the Past- A Philosophical Approach to History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 124.
2. Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 60.
3. Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 21.
4. Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 11.
5. Ibid., 31.
6. Ibid., 171.

Introduction to Volume One

The Arab Period in Armīnyah—Seventh to Eleventh Centuries

Chapter 1 of this volume traces factors in the pre-Islamic condition in Armenia from the fourth century to the arrival of the Arabs before the middle of the seventh century. These factors also shaped the patterns of Armenian–Islamic interactions, hence the relevance of this section to the general study. From the beginning, bipolarity and pluralism distinguished all things Armenian and both the culture and politics evolved between and as part of the Roman/Byzantine west and Persian/Islamic east, assimilating many elements from both.

The process continued to the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Ottoman Period. While most of the clergy and some of the nobility were consistently pro-western, the eastern camp was always broader and included large popular factions as well. The political–religious institutions were more rigid and pro-western, and the formation of dissident ideologies and careers was expected and happened. Regional politics contributed to the militarization of some trends and/or the suppression of others, but throughout, dissidence was part of the basic texture of Armenian history. This is a major argument in this book and the theme of Armenian dissidence is taken up throughout the study.

In general, each case and/or episode is studied in a holistic perspective. This means taking all the elements as parts of a whole. For example, as of the fourth century the “heretical” Christianity of the sects was as much part of early Armenian Christianity as that of the Church. Consequently, almost all of what has been written about the subject can only be partial. Armenian Christianity was not monolithic; it did not and could not really signal a sudden transition from one religious culture into another. Since there can be no purely religious ideology and culture, the substratum of both is simultaneously social, political, and economic.

Similar to heterodoxy, I also take syncretism as a paradigm to explain many obscure episodes, cultures, and folklores that persisted to the present. In general, the cultures of the entire region were unavoidably syncretistic, while ideological purism typified the policies and ideologies of the dominant religious and political institutions. Dichotomies between Armenian orthodoxy and heresy were drawn and conceptualized during the fifth century or the Golden Age of Armenian intellectual culture. They were maintained and persisted with force for many centuries. It is rarely noticed that the legacies of faith, language, and ancestral values of the fifth century or the Golden Age—or the fundamentals in the conceptualization of the Armenians as a distinct people—gradually turned into fixities that trapped the free flow of cultural traffic, while causing sedimentations and congestion.

The “orthodoxy” of the Armenian institutions took shape in the midst of Byzantine–Persian conflict during the fourth century and adopted the dogmatism and the imperialist spirit of both. By the eighth century, the first histories (as of the fifth century) shaped the national narrative/s, and simultaneously defined all that contradicted or questioned them. In other words, they played a double function. It was in the name of orthodoxy that the artistic and intellectual legacies of paganism of all sorts, Zoroastrianism and Hellenism, as well as the indigenous syncretism of the Near East were branded by the fox-sign, as it were, and the peculiarities of early Armenian Christianity dissolved in the anti-heretical debates. During the mid-fifth century, Eznik Kołbac’i (theologian, philosopher, translator, Bishop of Bagrewand, died just after the middle of the fifth century) provided the philosophical grounding for the legacies of faith, language, and ancestral values of the Classical Age. He introduced a battery of polemical techniques, and more importantly, he contributed to the militarization of the Church. Before the middle of the seventh century, and after the arrival of the Arabs in eastern Asia Minor, doctrinal affinities and persecution eased interactions between them and the sects, and the alliance with the Muslims militarized and politicized the dissident factions on the regional level.

As I try to show in this chapter and the study in general, Armenian dissidence was not just a class struggle within the peculiar feudal system, in which the Church too was another powerful participant. It was a more pervasive historical phenomenon. Individuals and trends of all social strata, even some clergy, for example, Eustathius (the Armenian bishop of Sivās during the third quarter of the fourth century), and during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Yakobos

(the Armenian bishop of the province of Hark' northwest of Lake Van) and his contemporary *Vardapet* (monk-priest) Grigor Narekac'i (d. c. 1003 of the Monastery of Narek on Lake Van) were suspected and accused of heresy. As I will demonstrate, they were in fact genuinely spiritual and revolutionary-reformist figures, and as such they were feared and persecuted. Medieval histories provided little information about these figures and their followers. While the first two were referred to in anti-heretical contexts, the latter was known only by his own autobiography and a popular cycle of legends, a Narekiana of sorts, about a certain saintly figure called Narek, who was not even a *vardapet*. In sum, as of the fourth century, what I call Armenian dissidence was a powerful, grassroots, reformist, and cosmopolitan movement, which, as mentioned, was militarized soon after the arrival of the Arabs and drew its path in regional politics.

Chapter 2, "Early Arab Campaigns and the Regulation of Relations According to the Medinan Legacy" deals with a relatively better-researched subject. However, the perspectives in which this period was narrated—but not analyzed—still remain very narrow. Also, instead of taking the year 884 (the coronation of the first Bagratuni king), I take the arrival of the Seljuks after mid-eleventh century as its end. While some medieval authors reconstructed the Arab period in epic terms, more modern and contemporary authors offered a tedious story of invaders and invaded, oppressors and oppressed, and Muslim fanatics and Christian martyrs. However looked upon, the Arab Period marked a massive exposure of the Armenians to a new and different, and primarily urban religious–political culture. Islam permanently changed the Near Eastern world and farther, both culturally and politically. Interactions happened, and still do, on all levels of society. It often escapes historians that as of the seventh century, Armenia became part of the Islamic world, also remaining part of the southern Caucasus. The situation has not changed much: three of the four neighbors of the Republic of Armenia today are countries with predominantly Muslim populations, namely, Turkey, Iran, and Azerbaijan. But still, Islamic–Armenian interactions of almost fourteen centuries have received minimal attention from scholars in all the disciplines. This is where my research begins. Islam caused an instant politicization of social conditions in Armenia. While in the case of the feudal nobility, the Armenian dynastic territories were created by Arab encouragement and support, large heterodox factions were politicized and militarized through their sympathies for and alliances with the Muslims. Either

way, interaction with both political and cultural Islam expanded the peripheries of the Armenian experience, and this is no trivial matter.

During the Arab period and practically due to Arab support, irrespective of the motives and the interests of the latter, the Armenian *naxarars* or nobility, such as the Bagratunis, Arcrunis, Siwnis rose to dynastic power. Byzantium always resented these so-called “kingdoms.” Byzantine emperors (many of whom were of Armenian descent) never acknowledged Armenian sovereignty and before the middle of the eleventh century these “kingdoms” were annexed to the Byzantine Empire. One of the peculiarities of medieval Armenian political culture was the total absence of basic frameworks of statehood and administration. The *naxarar* system remained archaic to a large extent, but the flexibility and pragmatism of the nobility and heterodox factions made up for lags in their evolution and contributed to the persistence of all. Often, ideology was secondary to interest. I have analyzed the Arab period in these perspectives.

Another and completely unstudied subject discussed in Chapter 2 is the development of the patterns in which Islamic–Armenian relations were regulated as per early-Islamic political culture. I argue that the literary tradition of Islamic oaths to Armenians is an absolutely vital issue that has never been studied. All but one of the circulating documents is verifiable, but the question of authenticity has nothing to do with the significance of the tradition. In medieval Armenian histories, the origin or the model, so to speak, of all Islamic–Armenian treatises was seen in the Medinan period of Islam (622–632) and in a so-called “Prophet’s Oath to Armenians” (allegedly given to an Armenian delegation to Medinah). A long chain of agreements—also called “oaths,” “treatises,” “peace agreements,” etc.—continued through the Umayyad, Ayyūbid, ‘Abbāsīd, and Safavid periods. The tradition also echoed in the Ottoman *Tanzimat* or Reforms of the nineteenth century. As each text in circulation claimed to be based on the previous ones, it became a link in a continuum. There came about a tradition, which acquired a historicity as an important aspect of Islamic–Armenian relations. More importantly, in most of the contacts and resulting agreements, the negotiator was the Armenian Church representing the people.

This leads us to another understudied subject: the status of the Armenian Church in Islamic states and societies. It must be common knowledge that under Muslim rule—even during the most somber moments of the later Ottoman period—the Armenian Church and clergy were protected by law and gained political significance and economic

prosperity. Monasteries and monastic schools were established in the tenth century and had exclusive control over the intellectual culture. The dark side of Armenian monasticism was its radicalism and institutional corruption. The rebellions in reaction were frequent and widespread. The causes and effects were simultaneously ideological, social, and economic. Troubled times, especially during the tenth and eleventh centuries on the entire surface of Armenia east and west, only partially surfaced in histories. To connect the dots, Arab sources are of primary importance, but other types of texts, such as anti-heretical texts and even poetry, must be referred to as well.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the so-called Paulician and T'ondrakian histories were very much a part of the Arab period. They produced perhaps the most intriguing paradigms to understand not only Armenian–Islamic interactions but also Armenian social–cultural history and folklore at that time. No literature has survived and most of the information on these trends came from their enemies; but from what has been written in anti-heretical texts, it is possible to draw the general outlines of their doctrinal position. I suggest that the philosophical *arche* (or first principle) and legacy of Armenian dissidence was what I call the “no-boundary” principle. It marked a transition from early Christianity to a more developed phase in social–religious culture. Rejection of hierarchy, egalitarian demands, communalism, rationalism of some trends and mysticism of others, equality of women, etc., were all expressions of a surprisingly developed culture.

The alliance of the heterodox factions with the Muslim side was a predictable and inevitable consequence of the situation in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, and not just in Armenia, which was anyway divided between the two. There was another factor in the evolution of Armenian dissidence, and that was Islamic dissidence. In Islam, dissident trends began appearing as of the first century of its advent. As discussed in my other articles and books, in my opinion, the so-called sects in various parts of the medieval Near East shared strikingly similar doctrines, circumstances, and careers. In fact, I could have a much better understanding of the Armenian sects after studying the Irano-Islamic and other syncretistic trends in the entire Near East. Armenian and Near Eastern scholars will have to realize that just as the Armenian ones, Islamic sects too are subjects in medieval Near Eastern urbanism. Similar to Ismāʿīlism, the politicization and militarization of Armenian dissident factions as of the eighth century marked an advanced stage in the evolution of Near Eastern society. Both were

closely connected to regional syncretism, reformist tendencies, social and economic change, power struggles, and many more factors, as I try to show in this study.

Another major theme is that of the urban youth coalitions of Armenian *manuks* and the Islamic *futuwwa*. As cities began developing in the ‘Abbāsid world, and already during the ninth century, there began appearing somehow anarchistic, extra-ethnic, extra-religious, and militant coalitions of jobless young men. But however they were known, *manuks*, *fityān*, *aḥdāth*, *‘ayyarūn*, and so on, they were aspects of Near Eastern urban and social development (as I try to demonstrate in Volume Three).

Also closely connected to the phenomenon of dissidence, the chapter provides yet another entirely new paradigm: the Frontiers or the Borderlands between the Byzantine and Islamic (Arab, Seljuk, and later Mongol) empires. As discussed in Volume Two as well, only recently scholars have begun studying this aspect of medieval Islamic history, but Armenian scholarship is still alien to this development. Even the dispute around the Byzantine epic of *Digenis Akritis* finds its proper context in the Frontiers. This was a vast area from the Black Sea to north al-Shām and Cilicia, where several cultures, trends, and traditions were diffused. The ‘Abbāsid project to create a unique and exclusive region for Holy War or *jihād* and a “true Muslim life” failed, but the Frontiers created for these ideals, or the *akritic* world became an entity of its own. The region was a haven for syncretistic, dissident, mostly militant and marginal communities. In this context, *Digenis Akritis* must be re-studied as “history” too, because it is the only surviving document that contains the identifiable echoes of a lost phase and lost world in Armenian and regional histories. I argue that an important part of Medieval Islamic–Armenian history falls, or rather must fall, under the heading of *akritics* or Borderlands history, with its own peculiar type of historicity. These border regions were a most appropriate milieu for indigenous Near Eastern syncretism, which under the strictly orthodox establishments of both Byzantium and the Caliphate, as well as all the churches, was unwelcome. Muslims and Christians of all ethnic backgrounds—like the heroes of *Digenis Akritis*—had more in common with one another than with the peoples on the opposite sides of the Frontiers. In over three centuries of existence, the Frontiers became a marker as well as an assimilator of differences. The condition allowed commercial contacts and became a breeding ground for a peculiar landholding warrior aristocracy.

Initially built as border fortifications, the small fortress towns on the Frontiers, and the Euphrates in particular, and some on the Tigris, became cities after the tenth–eleventh centuries and still maintained their cosmopolitan nature. Medieval cosmopolitanism is discussed in Volume Three.

The paradigm of Borderlands, suggested in this study, is absolutely essential to review and deconstruct many seemingly simple yet otherwise new and complex patterns of interaction between peoples of the region. Armenian–Islamic interactions are another aspect of this project. This chapter also gives some space for the discussion of the revolutionary-reformist or “dissident” nature of the literature of Grigor Narekac’i. I shall refer to him in Chapter 2 of Volume Two. He embodied his age, was accused of T’ondrakism, but was and still is kept at a safe distance from analysis in the mediocre portrait of the medieval “mystic” and “saint.”

Introduction to Volume Two

Armenian Realpolitik in the Islamic World and Diverging Paradigms

The Case of Cilicia—Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries

Volume Two is central to the book and generally the subject of Armenian–Islamic interactive history. In fact, this study had its genesis in the challenge posed by the “baffling phenomenon,” as my mentor Professor Kamal Salibi put it, of what I called the “Fāṭimid Armenians.” Even more baffling and almost unstudied was the larger question of the Armenian condition in and as a part of the medieval Islamic world, in and outside the traditionally recognized Armenian homeland. Much earlier, I began following “unorthodox” paths of inquiry into things Armenian, when as a graduate student I almost stumbled on a discovery. I traced the sources of a thirteenth-century Armenian manuscript in an esoteric Islamic source (the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity or *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*). The Ismā'īlī connection was a missing link and led to the study of militant heterodox Armenian factions in Upper Mesopotamia and al-Shām, the Fāṭimid Armenians, and, in general, an Armenian *Realpolitik* during the Seljuk and Crusader periods from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. I gradually came to realize that just as Muslim–Armenian power in the Islamic world was an aspect and product of this realpolitik, so was the rise of an “orthodox” Armenian state in Cilicia just another aspect of the same realpolitik, this time with the Latin Crusaders. Political ideals varied, but the style and mentality were the same and the period must have been taken as a singularity, but was not. This was a new perspective toward the Armenian experience in the medieval Near East, at least. Not only the panorama of these two centuries was fascinating but also the circumstances, courses of action, the peculiarities of peoples' behavior, and many more related details were surprisingly new and intriguing. I can only hope that the

reader will have as much enjoyment as I had during the research and writing of this volume.

One of the basic arguments in Chapter 1 of this volume is that during most periods of their history, Armenians made alliances with and/or fought against all the powers and factions in the region. Rarely, ideology gained priority over interest. The Armenian *realpolitik* is definitely a very useful paradigm, even for contemporary history in all parts of the Armenian habitat. However, it is also a controversial concept, because it negates the puristic claims in the traditional perception of Armenian history. The blunt pragmatism of many Armenian figures and factions of these times, at least, defies idealistic models of what is called “Armenian identity.”

The two centuries between the mid-tenth and late-twelfth centuries were periods of great political landslides and flooding, as it were, in the entire region. As the Arabs lost ground, Byzantium moved slowly to the east and south into al-Shām, while the Ghuzz and Turkic tribes began appearing in the region. The Armenian dynastic territories and nobility were receding, and the extra-establishment and often heterodox Armenian element made the most of the chaos. On the Borderlands between Byzantium and the ‘Abbāsids, also in al-Shām and Egypt, they gained political significance. The Turkish period had begun earlier, yet symbolically, the fall of Manazkert (or Manzikert) in 1071 was a turning point in their favor. However, already a few decades before this spectacular Byzantine defeat, Armenians of heterodox and extra-establishment backgrounds were gaining positions of power both on the Borderlands and in the Islamic world, in general.

The first three chapters of this volume also deal with the circumstances and tools of acquiring power, the social classes involved in these processes, the cultural environments within which they functioned, political alliances, geographic locations, patterns of interacting and manipulating Islam as well as Christianity, and, above all, the peculiar perceptions of ethnicity and national loyalties. These are only some of the intriguing aspects of this phase when the peripheries of the Armenian habitat drastically expanded from the Black Sea to the Caspian, northwestern Iran, and in the south from the Cilician Gates to the Amanus, al-Shām, and Egypt. They acted in new environments and in direct contact with many other peoples and political cultures. The arrival of the Turkic tribes and then the Crusaders served as decisive factors in social-cultural change, and the Armenians made alliances with them as well. These events coincided with the beginnings of

urbanization. Armenian–Turkish and Armenian–Islamic—particularly Ismāʿīlī realpolitik (in Fāṭimid Egypt as well)—during this period matched Armenian–Frankish realpolitik in Cilicia (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5).

This period also saw major changes in class structure. The old nobility receded and a new dominant class emerged from the heterodox and modest factions that had a chance to be militarized and politicized. A new urban “bourgeoisie” of sorts rose in the newly rising cities along with the warlords and territorial masters. In addition, the Church lost some of its political–economic significance. Armenian expansion and political activity in the region culminated in a great number of principalities, territorial lordships, kingdoms, and vizierial powers (as in Fāṭimid Egypt). Instead of total political collapse, as believed and discussed in many histories of these times, what occurred during these two centuries was a fragmentation and a breakdown of Armenian political–cultural energy into new and dynamic patterns and institutions. As extra-establishment and heterodox factions and figures became a part of Near Eastern politics, legitimacy became a relative matter. Furthermore, as many of the traditional fixities—such as the so-called *loyalties* of the Armenian Classical Age (or the fifth century)—dissipated and dichotomies between orthodoxy and heresy blurred, because the institutions that defined these lines either receded or were dismantled. New loyalties and alliances were made with both Christian and Muslim sides, free from institutional constraints. There were Latin and Chalcedonian Armenians, just as there were Sunnī, Shīʿī, and Ismāʿīlī Armenians. Armenian expansion and military–political activity took intriguing patterns and reached unprecedented levels.

Between 1060 and 1080, and almost simultaneously, there appeared at least five Muslim–Armenian powers: the Dānishmandids in Capadocia, the Bēnē Boghusaks in Sewawerak/Severek (just northeast of Samosata on the Euphrates), Philaretus from Germanica to Antioch, the Nāwīqīs (or the Awāqīs) in al-Shām, and the Fāṭimid Armenians in Egypt. In addition, there were paramilitary groups in small concentrations in many locations. The settlement of the Rubenids in Cilicia also comes in this context and is studied as such. The Armenian period, rather century in Fāṭimid Egypt, produced a fascinating series of patterns of interactions with Islam. As mentioned, one of the most peculiar and rich phases in Armenian and Near Eastern history was practically lost to Armenian scholarship. As discussed in Chapter 4, during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, what may be called a “dynastic

triangle,” or a “Second Age of Kingdoms” came at the hands of “orthodox” Armenians but from outside the traditional nobility. Gradually, an Armenian urban class developed in the entire Armenian habitat under the Muslims and/or whoever was in power, and in perfect accord with the authorities. Naturally, the condition of rural Armenians was always very different in every respect. In general, conversion was beneficial, and many chose Islam as an alternative religious culture and a way of life. Hyphenated identities are not new and already in the tenth century, hyphenations became realities for Armenians. Historical thinking in terms of dichotomies has lost grounds. There are no bases for exclusions and/or inclusions in mainstream histories, and only a holistic approach will do justice to any phenomenon or episode in the history of Armenians in the Islamic world. Seemingly contradictory details are a part of the same dynamic and rich texture of medieval as well as modern Armenian history, which traditional narratives impoverished beyond recognition.

During the thirteenth century, this dynastic triangle developed in the midst of the Franks, Mamlüks, Seljuks, Georgians, Ayyūbids, and Mongols. Cilicia was in the southwest, the Georgian–Armenian Zak‘arids were in the east, and Erzinjān/Erznka was in the north of Cilicia (under the Armenian bishop of the city and his descendants). The situation had many peculiarities and implications. First, it meant that Armenians were everywhere from Cappadocia to the east, south, and north, and in close contact with all the other peoples and powers. Next, this time around, the makers/rulers of these dynastic territories were from the military, with the exception of Erznka. The new nobility in these new locations had greater military prowess and knowledge of the region and the common people, and each group or figure had its own style and choices. Cilician and Zak‘arid political cultures and styles, in dealing with the political environment, were very different from those of the traditional dynastic houses. Even though the culture of Erznka was closer to Cilicia than to the east, it, nevertheless, was more cosmopolitan and closer to Islamic civilization than the latter. The Armenians in the east saw themselves as more “authentic” and “orthodox” than their southwestern compatriots, whereas the Cilicians who, because of their peculiar conditions, created what is known as the Silver Age of Armenian culture and raised the standards of intellectual and artistic production to very high levels. The diverging paradigms of this second age of kingdoms have not been studied in traditional historiography as aspects of a specific period; and discussions are often

limited to narrations of isolated Armenian microcosms, as it were, such as Cilicia, Zak'arid Armenia, perhaps, Erzinka, and so on. Interactions between the various limbs of the Armenian habitat on the one hand and the regional powers on the other are novel paradigms of realpolitik and cosmopolitanism.

Three hundred years of Cilician realpolitik between and with the Latin–Byzantine west and the Zankī–Ayyūbid–Mamlūk–Mongol east, the subject of Chapters 4 and 5, are such examples. Looked at from a holistic perspective, seemingly paradoxical episodes were, in fact, characteristic of these times. Within Cilician history itself, the project of a Latin–Armenian kingdom found a powerful antithesis in Cilician Prince Mleh's Zankī–Armenian kingdom, which, in fact, laid the foundations for the former. During these times, there were very intriguing moments and cases. For example, in 1172, while Mleh was leading Turkish troops against the Christian Greeks and Franks, Nersēs Šnorhali was chairing a church union council with the Greeks and Syrians at Hromkla on the Euphrates (just outside the borders of Cilicia in Muslim-controlled territory), and the Armenians of Egypt were being persecuted by Šalāḥ ed-Dīn, whose entourage included many Armenians. His target was Cilicia, then under Mleh, the pro-Zankī Rubenid prince married to a Turkmen–Armenian Nāwikī lady. Earlier on, during the late 1150s and the early 1160s, as Cilician prince T'oros was taking part in the Crusader expeditions into Muslim lands—hoping to establish a Latin–Armenian kingdom—another famous Armenian, the Imāmī vizier Ṭalā'ī' Ibn Ruzzik in Fāṭimid Egypt, was offering his services and large armies of mostly Muslim Armenians to Zankī Nūr ed-Dīn to drive the Crusaders or the “infidels” out of Muslim lands. In the context of Fāṭimid–Armenian history, one may legitimately ask whether the Arabic poetry of Fāṭimid Armenians, and that of Ṭalā'ī' in particular, should be considered a part of Armenian literature as well, as it was written by an Armenian. Does this literature fall in the tradition of modern authors such as William Saroyan, who was an American–Armenian? One may also wonder whether we should initiate a study of Ṭalā'ī's poetry as an Arab and/or an Egyptian–Armenian. I am aware that the comparison is problematic, because the categories of ethnicity, identity, national catastrophe, displacement, and the like did not exist in the medieval periods referred to. However, the exclusion of the entire phenomenon of Armenians outside the so-called *native lands* is equally problematic if not more. In the eyes of the Muslims, these figures and factions were simply *armans*, even after centuries of their migration.

They considered themselves “Armenian” with no scruples about the absence of language and faith. There is new material to be studied and analyzed at least for anthropologists as well as the historians. In the southwest of the historically defined Armenian homeland between the shores of the Mediterranean, and enclosed by mountain ranges, Cilician Armenians interacted with Crusaders, other Europeans, Arabs, Greeks, Turks, Ayyūbids, Mamlūks, and Mongols. These conditions were bound to generate a newer, more open, and complex culture that was very different from that of the Armenians in the east.

Philosophically realistic, theologically ecumenical, and politically pragmatic, this culture was also modernized to a large extent, and it was the single-most significant equivalent of the European Late Gothic and Proto-Renaissance culture in the Near East. On the crossroads of medieval Christian and Muslim civilizations and politics, the Cilicians were the first among the Christians of the East who developed genuinely ecumenical tendencies. These peculiarities grew out of the Cilician condition in a geographic spot where east and west, north and south interacted closely and often violently. Subsequently, Cilician culture became the matrix for the development of western Armenian intellectual and political traditions. This is a major aspect of the Cilician case. Chapter 5 deals with the spiritual and intellectual legacy of Cilicia. Church union negotiations, new outlooks on theology, philosophy, sciences, art, and literature are some of the themes. Had circumstances been different during the Ottoman period in the region, a true Armenian renaissance would have materialized in Cilicia.

Introduction to Volume Three

Medieval Cosmopolitanism and Images of Islam

Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries

The themes and issues discussed in this volume are the least political and the most social-cultural of the trilogy, yet the objective—as in this entire study—is to suggest fresh political readings of these and all other things Armenian and related texts. One of the major paradigms suggested and applied in this volume is medieval cosmopolitanism. During the late Seljuk and the Mongol periods, interactions in cities of mostly mixed population in Asia Minor took unexpected and intriguing patterns, and as it is obvious, they have escaped the limited scope and paradigms of traditional Armenian historiography. Close encounters occurred in urban environments on all levels, such as sciences, crafts, social organization, the folklore, poetry, and music/song. In Part One, the city of Erzinjān or Erznka is my case study, because of the availability and nature of three primary texts by authors who were natives of the city. In Part Two, the theme is the conceptualization and images of Islam and Prophet Muḥammad in medieval literature as of the seventh century to the fourteenth, and two polemical texts of the last decade of the fourteenth century. Again, the basis of all discussions is over twenty primary texts. These texts stand as direct proofs of interactions on the levels of sciences, social organization, poetry, and inter-faith polemics-apologetics. The reader has the opportunity to move between metaphysics, cosmology, logic, natural sciences, psychology, poetry, folklore, urban youth coalitions (Islamic *futuwwa* and Armenian *manuks*) and their culture, mutual images of Muslims and Armenians, urban landscapes, Legends of Mahmet, polemics, and more.

Part One is dedicated to the case of Erznka as a cluster of paradigms. On the upper reaches of the Western Euphrates, on the great trade routes, and by its natural resources, this city-state became an appropriate milieu for the development of a truly cosmopolitan urban society.

As far as the Armenians were concerned and as the textual evidence shows, the city was also a gateway to Islamic civilization and Muslims of different backgrounds. As demonstrated in this volume, the proofs are found in the literature of two natives of the city, Yovhannēs (d. 1293) and Kostandin (d. ca. 1330s). The former was a man of the church, theologian, scholar, and poet; the latter was his younger compatriot and one of the most famous lyrical poets of his age and medieval Armenian literature.

Yovhannēs Erznkac'i is particularly important for our theme. As demonstrated in my monologue (1991), the source of his *Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers* (*I Tačkak' Imastasirac' Groc' Kaleal Bank'*) was in fact a brief summary of the esoteric and encyclopedic epistles of the Brethren of Purity (*Rasā'il Ikhwān el-Šafā'*). The latter became a reference for his entire literature. The initiative and his repeated invitations "not to shun the sciences of other races," meaning the Muslims, clearly showed an open disposition toward sources of knowledge and other cultures irrespective of religious and ethnic differences. As discussed in Volume Two, previously, Bishop Nersēs Lambronac'i of Cilicia (1153–1198) was accused—by Armenian clergy in Siwnik' and elsewhere on the Armenian mainland—of Latinophilia and excessive openness and tolerance toward all other peoples and cultures in the Near East. Lambronac'i tried very hard to justify his position in the context of Christianity and the traditions of the Armenian Church itself. In turn, a genuinely sincere man of the church, Yovhannēs was very much connected to Cilicians and their culture, and only vaguely alluded to his heterodox Muslim sources. He was never accused of Islamophilia, even though he introduced *en masse* philosophical concepts and a comprehensive reform project for the urban youth brotherhoods into Armenian society, not only in Erznka, but in other cities of the region as well. The factor which eased and helped a transition of these dimensions was precisely the cosmopolitan environment in Erznka. His literature stands as witness to the cosmopolitan nature of the Armenian population of Erznka and its province, at least. While Lambronac'i, a bold Het'umid nobleman, publicized his opinions and came under fire from the conservative eastern Armenians, Yovhannēs managed to establish bridges with Islamic intellectual culture, borrowing and applying ideas even from the strictly orthodox institution of the Caliphate at Baghdad. His famous *Constitution*, for the reform of the Armenian Brotherhoods of Erznka (in two parts, written in 1280), was in many ways a christianized version of 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir's

(d. 1225) project for the Islamic urban youth coalitions or the *futuwwa*, some decades earlier. The Armenian Church and society accepted the ideas and literature of Yovhannēs not only in his own time and city but everywhere for centuries to come.

Chapter 1 of Part One is a brief survey of the city of Erznka and, as I demonstrate, the Ismā'īlī channel through which most of the Arabic texts became available in the city. Chapter 2 deals with the introduction of secular knowledge and sciences in Armenian intellectual culture through Yovhannēs's summary of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (a discovery I had made as a graduate student many years ago). Chapter 3 of Part One establishes close connections between the Armenian and Islamic urban youth coalitions and the adoption of Caliph al-Nāṣir's reform project not only in Erznka, but later on in the East European Armenian communities to the end of the nineteenth century. The last chapter of Part One is a comparative study of Armenian and Futuwwa Brotherhood poetry.

The subject of urban coalitions and Armenian youth as part of them in the cities of the entire Near East brings things Armenian into their natural context. Very little has been written about urban coalitions and cosmopolitan life in cities, and Armenian social histories will have to be reconsidered in the light of this new material. As extra-ethnic and extra-religious groups, these coalitions became vehicles in the development of popular and secular cultures and arts and in their integration in the urban and cosmopolitan artworld. Furthermore, I argue that just as today there is a vast and complex contemporary global culture particularly in urban centers everywhere, similarly, there was a global Near Eastern cultural world that functioned as an extra-ethnic and extra-religious matrix.

Part Two focuses on the images of the Prophet Muḥammad in medieval Armenian literature and the conceptualization of Islam through polemical strategies. The Armenian Church never approached the subject of Islam as an alternative faith and way of life. Only after almost eight centuries of experience in the Islamic world, the first ever and only response appeared during 1390s. As discussed at many occasions in this trilogy, by virtue of their syncretism and often adoptionism, the medieval Armenian sects or heresies were direct channels to and interaction with all the other religious cultures in the region, including and especially doctrinal and political Islam (after the seventh century). Concerning images of the Prophet Muḥammad, it has not been noticed that Armenian literary-intellectual culture indirectly

yet exclusively depended on a dynamic cycle of legends (*arāspel*), which I call the Cycle of Mahmet Legends, about the life and stories of a certain conqueror from the deep desert. There is no indication that the medieval Armenian authors (who were men of the church) had any knowledge of literary Arabic or had read the Qurʾān, the *Ḥadīth* (Islamic Tradition), and traditional biographies of Muḥammad (known as the *Sīrah*). Their information about the beliefs and practices of the Muslims was never textual and depended on secondary sources, mainly the Cycle of Mahmet Legends, a Karshuni in some versions, and Arab Christian polemical literature. It is even more unusual to see that from the seventh century to the present, this legendary cycle about the founder of Islam persisted and summed up all that most Armenians—including clergy and academics—knew and cared to know about Islam and its peculiar world. The Armenian Mahmet/Mehmet/Mahmat was and still is the protagonist of legends about a formidable world-conqueror and a person of dubious morals. This is the argument of this chapter: the legendary context of the images of the Prophet of Islam in medieval Armenian literature and folklore. In order to give the reader some ground for immediate comparison, Chapters 1 and 2 are schematic exposés of the life and teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad and Arab-Christian apologetic/polemical traditions. Chapter 3 is dedicated to a brief presentation of the image of the “Armenian Mahmet” through the “Cycle of Mahmet Legends,” as well as the karshuni, believed to be the only reference for all authors.

Chapter 4 focuses on the polemical and apologetic strategies and arguments of Grigor Tatʿewacʿi and Mattʿeos Ĵulayecʿi, as expounded in two major texts, the only ones in this genre in the entire literary tradition both medieval and modern. At the end of the fourteenth century, after almost eight centuries of coexistence and interaction and the loss of all types of Armenian sovereignty everywhere, at the School and Monastery of Tatʿew (in the southern part of the contemporary Republic of Armenia), the Church finally made its perceptions of Islam public, but for the Armenian audience only. At the end of an era, these texts also summarized the mutual perceptions the Armenians and the Muslims had of each other. Otherwise, the polemical themes and arsenal are almost identical with Arab and Latin works of much earlier periods from early eighth to twelfth centuries. The question-answer format in turn was simply a legacy of this Christian polemical literature.

The initiative of these authors was prompted by the proliferation of conversions among Armenians. After 1300, when the Mongols initiated

compulsory conversions, many Armenians converted voluntarily too. In the great monasteries of Siwnik' and elsewhere, the scholars, who considered themselves the guardians of Armenian "orthodoxy," commented on and complained about "alien" and undesirable practices. These scholars also knew that while both the heterodox Armenians and the converts had access to the Qur'ān, most Armenians were ignorant of their own faith, mainly because of their illiteracy (which continued to the nineteenth century).

As discussed, the polemical texts of Grigor Tat'ewac'i and Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i were in fact addressed to Armenians, both orthodox and heterodox. Similar to most Arab-Christian texts, the so called "Muslim adversaries" in the "debates" or the *tajiks* of Armenian polemicists, were hypothetical characters. It was the Prophet Muḥammad, who defined the list of subjects for debate with the non-Muslims, and the Christians in particular. The repertoire was maintained by Arab-Christian polemicists. The more erudite and sophisticated authors simply refined the style by some Aristotelian logic, but added no novel topics. Grigor and Matt'ēos, in turn, remained within the same tradition and predictably drew a more local and political stage for their discussions by specific examples and idioms. The aim was to teach the Armenians—perhaps for the first time—the principles of their own faith, and to show its moral and rational superiority over Islam. Otherwise, these texts reflected intriguing images which Armenians and Muslims had of each other and revealed the extent and type of knowledge Armenian clergy had of Islam. At the end of an era, and similar to Eznik in the middle of the fifth century (as discussed in Chapter 1 of Volume One), these authors were trying to draw the lines of Armenian orthodoxy and terms of coexistence in an overwhelmingly Islamic world and under Islamic laws.

Part One

Paradigms of Medieval Cosmopolitanism

*The Case of Erznka/Erzinjān—Sciences, Society,
and Literature in the Thirteenth Century*

The City of Erznka and the Ismā‘īlī Connection

I. Erzinjān/Erznka and Three Levels of Interaction

Taking Erzinjān/Erznka in the thirteenth century as a case study, Part One of this volume draws close interactions and sometimes Armenianizations of Arabic texts in the sciences, urban social reform, and poetry. Large sections are dedicated to textual comparisons. Centuries of coexistence in the urban cosmopolitan centers of central and eastern Asia Minor and al-Shām opened broad channels with Muslims and Islamic culture in general. While large agrarian communities spread throughout the Armenian habitat were inevitably isolated, urbanized Armenians became part of the local communities in the cities. To the end of the thirteenth century, interactions were natural aspects of life, but medieval Armenian authors—almost exclusively from the clergy—occasionally made use of only those of Arab sources that dealt with health, some cosmology, and crafts.

During the twelfth century there were over a hundred urbanized locations in Seljuk Asia Minor,¹ and the population of most was mixed. Each town had its governor and a *qāḍī* (religious judge) for the affairs of the Muslims, who had a subordinate officer called *muḥtasib* for the affairs of the non-Muslims.² As Islamization increased, homogenization of the population, mutual interests, and economic reasons led to a harmony of sorts.³ The incoming Seljuk Turks and the Mongols needed the local Armenians and Greeks for their expertise in agriculture, crafts, and trade. The more significant factor in the activation of interactions was the location of a given city and its part in regional trade. This was the case of Erznka, one of the most important urban trade centers of northeastern Asia Minor. Despite its mixed population, Armenians seemed to be the majority, and Erznka was often called an “Armenian city.” Cahen elaborates:

For the Armenians [in eastern Asia Minor] the main scene of action was Erzinjān, which was long to remain their real metropolis in Turkey. The bishop, Sarkis/Sergius, not only constituted a local power, but was also reputed to be a respected counselor of the [Mongol] Ilkhānids. He had even sought—though without success—to obtain Erzinka as an *iqṭāʿ*, in return for furnishing the army with a contingent of 500 men. During the disturbances in 1276 some Kurds, who had been encouraged to intervene in eastern Anatolia against the Mongols and their accomplices, planned to assassinate him. In the fourteenth century, when the city was totally under the Mongols' (who had converted to Islam) control, it still remained a largely Armenian town.⁴

There are no records of grave conflicts between the Christians and Muslims of the city, even during Seljuk rule and early Mongol occupation. But after the conversion of the Mongols and by the end of the thirteenth century oppressive measures were taken against the Christians in Erzinka as well. In 1314, for example, a Franciscan missionary was murdered. But despite Mongol-Seljuk clashes and general instability, trade was rarely disrupted and merchant caravans passed through the city.⁵ In general, the relatively free flow of traffic was a peculiarity of the medieval Near East and Armenia at much earlier periods too. With the exception of rare moments, wars did not seem to affect trade seriously or for long periods of time.

Like many other cities on trade routes, Erzinka⁶ too was an appropriate location and environment for the development of a cosmopolitan society and culture. If it were not for the literature and career of Yovhannēs (d. 1293) and Kostandin (d. ca.1330s) (both natives of the city are called “Erznkacʿi”), the record of these times would have been very hard to trace. Also, it would have been almost impossible to know the advanced and unexpected levels of interaction between the many different ethnic and religious communities there. Based on three groups of texts from these authors, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Part One focus on three levels/areas of interaction: the sciences, society, and literature.

The secularization of knowledge and the sciences is the first level. The text used in this study is Yovhannēs's *I Tačkakʿ Imastasiracʿ Grocʿ Kale-al Bankʿ* (Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers, henceforth *Views*).⁷ As demonstrated by this author in another monograph, the *Views* was in fact a very brief summary of about fifty pages of *Rasāʿil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʿ* or the esoteric *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*rasāʿil* is the plural of *risālah* or epistle) written most probably in the tenth century in Baṣrah, in the south of modern Iraq.⁸ The second level is

the organization/control of urban society and culture by the Church, through their “spiritualization” after an Islamic model. This was the *futuwwa* reform project and literature of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (1180/575H–1225/622H) launched during early 1200s. Commissioned by the Church (which at the time functioned as the secular authority too, as will be discussed below), in 1280 Yovhannēs wrote two texts: *Sahman ew Kanonk’ Miabanut’ean Elbarc’* [Definition and Canons for the Coalition or Union of the Brothers] and *Krkin Kanonk’ ew Xratk’ Tlayahasak Mankanc’ Ašxarhakanac’* [Additional Canons and Advices for Secular Youth].⁹

The third level of close interactions is the urbanization of culture through *futuwwa* and brotherhood poetry and the literary-cultural significance of the *fityān* and *manuks*. The texts used are from *futuwwa* poetry and the brotherhood poems of Yovhannēs and Kostandin.¹⁰

II. The City of Erznka and the Ismā'īlī Channel

One of the arguments in this chapter is that the channel through which the *Rasā'il* reached Erznka was the Ismā'īlī movement and its missionaries or *dā'īs*. As discussed in Volumes One and Two, as of the ninth century at least, Armenian-Islamic ideological-religious interactions were mostly through heterodox factions, and with Shī'ism and Ismā'ilism in particular. The T'ondrakians, who appeared on the stage of eastern Asia Minor and Armenia simultaneously with the Khurramid-Babakians in the early ninth century, were accused of being instructed in Irano-Islamic astrological-scientific beliefs and practices. More than moderate Shī'ism, T'ondrakian doctrines and political careers strongly suggest Ismā'īlī links. During the eleventh century, heterodox Armenians were in close contact and collaboration with similar factions throughout al-Shām and were directly involved in Fāṭimid-Ismā'īlī Egypt, as discussed in Volume Two. In turn, the various activist Ismā'īlī factions, such as the Qarmāṭians and Nizārīs, spread in urban centers. Contacts through trade, urban institutions, military operations, and simply folklore were inevitable and indeed did occur.

The surfacing of the esoteric *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* or *Rasā'il Ikhwāan al-Ṣafā'* in Erznka and the application of Caliph al-Nāṣir's *futuwwa* reform program in the city were continuations of a trend that had started centuries earlier. This is a core issue and a process on the ground without which the study of both the urban youth coalitions and Islamic-Armenian interactions in general will lose their

historic contexts and significance. The *Rasā'il* circulated in its complete form and often in summary versions and/or separate volumes and sections. It had Ismā'īlī-Qarmāṭian authorship and, as an esoteric text, could only be popularized through the heterodox Ismā'īlis themselves. For example, Rashīd ed-Dīn Sinān Ibn Sulaymān, the chief of the Assassins in Syria, used the *Rasā'il* as part of the secret (or *Ḥaqā'iq*) literature of the sect. The merchant disguise for the Ismā'īlī missionaries who spread this literature was a common one and had been used earlier by the Christians for their missionary work. These Ismā'īlī missionaries were also sometimes known as learned *khojas* (meaning learned, old, well-to-do men). A cosmopolitan, multilingual, and multicultural city of trade, crafts, and entertainment, Erznka was the most appropriate milieu for missionary activity and, in general, cultural exchange.

Erznka, in Armenian also called Erez, Eriza, Erizawan, and Arznka, was a pagan center and the capital of the province of Ekeleac', a historical Armenian district on the upper reaches of the western Euphrates. Endowed with an exotic nature, and situated between Daranali and Mananali, two traditionally sectarian regions in the north of central Asia Minor, this city was urbanized faster than others. Being on the great trade routes, its culture and society were inevitably cosmopolitan; hence, the preference of heterodox factions of this particular spot. The city fell to the Seljuks around 1057, and remained so (except for a brief period) until the Mongols occupied it, first in 1243, and finally in 1256. It was told that during the second invasion of the city, the Armenians in the Mongol armies took the side of their compatriots in Erznka. Awag, Šahanšāh, Vahram, 'Abdallāh, Jalāl, and Ḥasan were mentioned as such.¹¹ For at least the next fifty years, the Mongols did not rule the city and the province of Ekeleac' directly. Instead, they used the existing apparatus and in this case the Church. Erznka became an internally sovereign principality under Archbishop Sargis and his descendants.¹²

In the year 1294, Marco Polo visited the city and recorded his admiration at its beauty and prosperity. Later, around the year 1330, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa spent a short time there and gave valuable information on its folklore, social classes, and the urban youth coalitions or the *akhīs* in particular. According to him, most of the inhabitants were Armenian Muslims.¹³ I have found no record in Armenian literature to confirm this information, but it is not surprising to find at least Muslim sympathizers among the heterodox Armenians of the city as well as its Akhi coalitions, which were anyway of mixed membership. It is possible that

since Ibn Baṭṭūṭa spent his time in Erzinka at an Akhī house, most of the Armenians he met there must have been Muslim. As a significant urban center, the city had several brotherhood coalitions, known as akhī organizations. Y. Kurtean mentions the name of a certain akhī in Erzinka called Nizām ed-Dīn, but he does not refer to any interactions with Muslims or Muslim Armenians in the city.¹⁴

The Constitution that Yovhannēs wrote for the brotherhoods of the city in 1280 is the single most credible indication of the existence of large urban brotherhoods in Erzinka and other Armenian cities too. During the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Grigor Tat'ewac'i, Matt'ēos Juḷayec'i, and T'ovma Mecop'ec'i referred to urban—or as they described *ašxarhakan* or secular (as opposed to the religious brotherhoods/orders)—brotherhoods in their time. These texts, most of which have not been made available to Near Eastern scholars, are new material for scholars of Near Eastern futuwwa or urban youth coalitions.

Under Archbishop Sargis and his descendants, Erzinka consolidated its position as an internally autonomous dynastic enclave north of and closely connected to Cilicia in the south. In addition to its reputation of being a city of wine, pleasures, and moral license, it was also a center for learning, crafts, and trade. The city was also known for its rich merchant class of *khojas* and *barons*.¹⁵

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this city at the time—as far as Armenians are concerned—is that Erzinka was a wide gateway to and from Islamic culture. Its folklore, dialect, and literature reflect this status. On the popular level, intermarriages and friendships were common. According to legend, and based on a poem ascribed to him (and others as well), Yovhannēs was said to have fallen in love with the daughter of a local *molla* (or Muslim cleric of any trend, also wise, old, pious man). There is an Armenian cycle of romances in popular poetry of the same theme which existed in his time and continued for centuries after him too. As a poet, Yovhannēs may have used the motif in his own style and for his own objectives. In his version, the Muslim girl volunteers to convert, but the relationship with her Christian lover does not end in marriage. At any rate, episodes of this nature and intermarriages must have been common even though they were kept out of the literature, both then and later on. Erzinka had a large Muslim community of many ethnic backgrounds. It was also a haven for both Christian and Muslim heterodox factions, both Armenian and others such as Ismā'īlīs.¹⁶

III. Ismā'īlis, Qarmāṭians, and the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* or Epistles of the Brethren of Purity

The disintegration of political unity in the 'Abbāsid world during the tenth century was perhaps the most serious and irreversible process in the Islamic world. The caliphate in Baghdad lost its centrality and the empire broke into smaller kingdoms: the Ṣaffarids were in Persia (867–908), the Samānids in Transoxania and Persia (874–979), the Ghaznawids in Afghanistan and Punjab (962–1186) and the Buwayhids (946–1055) in Baghdad. The latter fell to the Seljuk Turks in 1055 (to 1194). It was during the Buwayhid period that Shī'ism became dominant in the 'Abbāsid capital and the Ismā'īlis—themselves being a sub-Shī'ī trend—made the most of it. Despite the weakening of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, the tenth century saw great advances in the sciences and literature. A unique alloy of mysticism and a secular-scientific spirit dominated Islamic intellectual culture. It was reflected even in the works of seemingly radical orthodox Sunnī scholar-theologian al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111). Similar to Ibn Sīnā (980–1037), another giant of Islamic intellectual culture, he too was said to have been trained in the Ismā'īlī tradition.

A strongly reformist and intellectually progressive work, the *Rasā'il* made a synthesis of almost the entire legacy of the sciences of the age in an eclectic Neoplatonic-Pythagorean system, with all the inconsistencies that their syncretism and political project entailed. The preoccupation of Muslim scholars and the Ismā'īlis with the problem of unity (of all things, intellectual and physical) linked them to these trends. The idea of the One, as the first indivisible principle/God, and as a number, and the generation of everything from this point were very convenient applications. The Ismā'īlis adopted many aspects of these schools. M. Fakhry explains:

The peculiar blend of mysticism and science so characteristic of Pythagoreanism made a decisive impact upon a large section of opinion in Islam that had come under the influence of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought. This blend satisfied the bipolarity in Muslim thought, torn as it was between Greece and the Orient.¹⁷

The authors of the *Rasā'il* are believed to be a secret philosophic-religious society established in Baṣrah. They styled themselves as *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* or Brethren of Purity. Fakhry describes their roots:

Issuing from the ranks of the Ismā'īlī, heterodox Shī'ite subject who had been engaged in secret political propaganda ever since the

death of their Imām, Ismā'īl, in 760, the Brethren of Purity continued the secret propagandist activity of the early Ismā'īlī, and especially Qarmāṭian *dā'īs* [missionaries], but injected into it a new scientific and philosophical spirit.¹⁸

P. Hitti has a somehow different perspective on the Brethren:

About the middle of the fourth Moslem century (c. 970) there flourished in al-Baṣrah an interesting eclectic school of popular philosophy, with leanings toward Pythagorean speculations, known as *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (the brethren of sincerity). The appellation is presumably taken from the story of the ringdove in *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* in which it is related that a group of animals by acting as faithful friends (*ikhwān al-ṣafā'*) to one another escaped the snares of the hunter. The *Ikhwān*, who had a branch in Baghdad, formed not only a philosophical but also a religio-political association with ultra-Shī'ite, probably Ismā'īlite, views and were opposed to the existing political order, which they evidently aimed to overthrow by undermining the popular intellectual system and religious beliefs, hence the obscurity surrounding their activities and membership.¹⁹

Their Epistles, continues Hitti, written in encyclopedic style, embodied “the sum-total of knowledge that a cultural man of that age was supposed to acquire.” More importantly, the language of the *Epistles* shows that by that time Arabic had become an adequate instrument for expressing scientific thought. As mentioned, several important figures, like Ibn Sīnā, who was thought to be a sympathizer and al-Ghazzālī, were influenced by this group. Abū'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (973–1057), the great Syrian poet-philosopher, a descendant of the Tannukh [clan], attended the meetings of the Brethren in Baghdad and²⁰ “was inoculated with the ideas of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, as well as others of Indian origin.”²¹ Hitti also believes that 'Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), the famous Mu'tazilite, who with al-Rawandī (d. 915) and al-Ma'arrī formed the trinity of arch-heretics in Islam, was a pupil if not an active member of the fraternity,” or the *Ikhwān*.²² The Qarmāṭī connection with the *Rasā'il* and the Brethren is another intriguing aspect of this subject.

For their unique significance for the subject of Armenian-Islamic interactions, a parenthesis must be opened at this point about the Ismā'īlī movement. Ismā'īl (d. 760), the son of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, was the hidden *mahdī* (paraclete, expected savior) of the Sevens Shi'is. This is the reason why the number seven (and numbers in general) is significant for the Ismā'īlīs, as it was in the Pythagorean system to which they were very close. In the Gnostic system of the Ismā'īlīs, only partially

based on Neoplatonism, there were seven steps of emanation (God, universal mind, universal soul, primeval matter, space, time, world of earth, and man). They also venerated seven legislating prophets, who were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus/ʿĪsā, Muḥammad, and Muḥammad al-Tamīm, the son of Ismāʿīl.

The Ismāʿīlīs managed to develop a sophisticated system of political-religious propaganda. Positioned against the Sunnī-Arab establishment and from their special centers and strongholds, they dispatched agents and missionaries into many parts of the Islamic world to preach their *bāṭini* (inner, esoteric) doctrines. They suggested that the Qurʾān and other prophetic and religious texts had apparent-outer as well as hidden-inner levels of meaning. According to them there were nine grades of initiation, and the novice was gradually introduced to the hidden meanings about God, the universe, doctrines of emanation, man, soul, transmigration, etc.

The system was perfected by ʿAbdallāh, the son of a certain Persian Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ (or ‘eye-doctor,’ ophthalmologist), who was originally from al-Ahwāz in Iran. He was said to have engineered the Ismāʿīlī religious-political system and worked through a secret network from Baṣrah and later on from Salāmiyah in central Syria (to this day a purely Ismāʿīlī town). The missionaries spread the word about the arrival of the *imām-mahdī* and, as planned, eventually the movement achieved its goal when the Ismāʿīlī Fāṭimid dynasty appeared in Tunisia in 909.²³ It then moved to Egypt in 969 and lasted 202 years, to 1171.

In 874, just before his death, ʿAbdallāh found a zealous successor in Ḥamdān Qarmāṭ, a peasant from Iraq. ‘Qarmāṭ’ is not an Arabic word, and according to Hitti, it is Aramaic for “secret teacher.” This man claimed to have “read in the stars that the Iranians were going to regain the empire from the Arabs.”²⁴ From the beginning, the movement had a distinct Persian ethnic color. To assist in the realization of this prophesy, Ḥamdān became the founder of the *Bāṭini* (esoteric) *Qarmāṭī* sect (*Qarāmīṭah* in plural), or the Qarmāṭians.

Several regional conflicts found their expression in this movement. Established in al-Kūfah, the Qarmāṭians created a communal society based on sharing of everything (allegedly, wives too). Like the authors of the *Rasāʾil*, they too preached tolerance and equality and gradually organized primitive forms of guilds. We find sketches for their organization in the Eighth Epistle of the *Rasāʾil*. It is believed that the Brethren of Purity, the authors of the *Rasāʾil* were most probably Qarmāṭians.²⁵

In addition to their reformist and esoteric ideology and just like the T'ondrakians, the Qarmāṭians were a militant religious-political movement. They considered shedding the blood of their opponents lawful, even if their opponents were Muslims. In 899, they managed to create an independent state of their own in the Arab/Persian Gulf, with al-Aḥsā' as its capital. Soon they organized raids on their foes as far as Arabia. They carried the most holy relic of Islam, the Black Stone of Mecca to their land. It was returned only in 951/339H.²⁶ They were active throughout the region well into the thirteenth century and later.

The name of a rather familiar Ismā'īlī dā'ī appears as a key to the relations between the movement and the Armenians. He is al-Sayyid Abū Ḥatīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāzī al-Warsinānī (or Warsāmī, d. 933). In his *Kitāb al-Zaynah* (book of embellishment), Warsāmī calls himself Abū Ḥatīm Ibn Ḥamdān. We find references to him in al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb al-Farq bayn al-Firāq* (the difference/s between divergences), Nizām al-Mulk's *Siasat Name*, and Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* (list, contents).²⁷ Judging from his title al-Sayyid, this man must have had an important rank in the movement. Established in Rayy in Iran, Warsāmī organized missionary work and visited many places, including Armīnyah. Several books are ascribed to him: *Kitāb al-Nubuwwah*, *Kitāb al-Jāmi'*, *Kitāb al-Is'lāh*, etc. According to Ivanow, Warsāmī was in close contact with the "fathers of the Armenian Church."²⁸ Another merchant-Ismā'īlī missionary is mentioned in the predominantly Armenian city of Dwin or Dābil.²⁹ It is said that he was killed by people within his own circle. A merchant-missionary nicknamed al-Dābilī (from, or native of, Dābil) succeeded him as the head-missionary in the city.³⁰

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Nuṣayrīs, Druzes, and the Assassins of Alamūt were active in al-Shām. The founder and leader of the Assassins, master of the missionaries (*dā'ī al-du'āt*) al-Ṣabbāḥ spread both the doctrines and terror from the Fortress of Alamūt.³¹ The fortress fell in 1254–55 to Mongol Hulaku. It is said that the Mongols confiscated the valuable collections of the famous library of Alamūt—including copies of the *Rasā'il*—and carried the booty to Asia Minor, where wealthy Ismā'īlī merchant/missionaries may have bought them back.³² Neither the Sunnī Mongols nor the Turks had any use for them.

The Ismā'īlīs gained the sympathy and the support of Ruḍwān Ibn Tutush (d. 1113), the Seljuk ruler of Aleppo,³³ and in 1140 they settled in several fortresses in north Syria such as al-Kahf, al-Qadmūs,

al-‘Ullayqah, etc. Their master was Rashīd ed-Dīn Sinān (d. 1192) who resided at Maṣyāf in northwestern Syria and was known as *shaykh al-jabal* (as mentioned in Volume Two). The Crusaders called him “le vieux de la montagne” (the old man of the mountain). This large fortress-town was situated in the Valley of the Orontes, on the trade route from the Mediterranean to inland, about ninety-five miles from Ḥamāh in west-central Syria. It fell to the Mamlūks in 1260, and in 1272, the Mamlūk leader Baybars finally destroyed the military structure of the Nizārī Ismā‘īlis and the Assassins there. Since then, they scattered in central Syria, Iran, ‘Umān, and mostly India, where they are still known as *khojas* and *mawlās*.³⁴

IV. The *Rasā’il*: Sources, Objectives, and Content

The *Rasā’il*, in four volumes, was first published in Leipzig in 1833, then Bombay in 1886, Cairo in 1928, and Beirut in 1957. There is a general summary called *al-Risālah al-Jāmi’ah*, almost half the size of the complete work. Even though it is a smaller version, some themes such as the “Virtuous City” (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*) appear only in this summary, while others such as botanical and zoological subjects are minimal. The style of *al-Risālah al-Jāmi’ah* is more mystical and enigmatic. There is a much shorter and popular summary of about hundred pages titled *Risālat Jāmi’at al-Jāmi’ah*.³⁵ Its authorship is not known. Some Ismā‘īli historians believe that it must have been the work of one of their spiritual leaders or the imāms, even though anyone may have prepared this simplified summary.³⁶

From Neoplatonic-Pythagorean and eclectic positions, the aim of the Brethren was to develop a rationalistic and comprehensive religious-political-scientific system of knowledge geared toward spiritual emancipation. Their rationalism was described as follows:

We assert that reason is the guide of the Brethren, because God has decided that the virtuous be guided by it. . . . Any science and moral system that fails to contribute to the [ultimate] objective of man to achieve eternal life should be considered a burden on his shoulders.³⁷

In the First Epistle of the first volume, the authors of the *Rasā’il* introduce themselves and their philosophy as follows:

You must know my brother [akhī] that the authors of these Epistles and he who seeks knowledge in them, are pursuers of their [own] deliverance. Wise, brave and magnanimous people they are like

the owners of a lush, gorgeous and well-groomed orchard full of delicious fruits.³⁸

In an indication to their eclectic dispositions, and almost as a warning to the more orthodox, they say:

It is important for the brothers to remember that it is not allowed under all circumstances to overlook or ignore any book. . . . Our philosophy embraces the knowledge of all things, from the sensible beings to the intelligible, from the beginning to the end, in their inner and outer natures . . . as though they were generated from a single principle . . . and inhabited by a single soul yet manifested in a manifold of phenomena . . . and species.³⁹

The authors of the *Rasā'il* list their sources, as they put, as follows:

- Books on philosophical, mathematical, and natural sciences.
 - Holy Scriptures: the Old and New Testaments, the Qur'ān, and other epistles written in “prophetic spirit” and “deep theological insight.”
 - Astrological-astronomical books that contain information about the planets, celestial bodies and their movements, as well as information on minerals, plants, and animals.
 - Esoteric works of a very high level that can only be approached by people who belong to the “angelic rank.” These texts are about the true nature of souls, their relationship to bodies, the reasons for the fall of some souls and ascent of others, transmigration and related themes.⁴⁰
- The fifty-two epistles or risālahs of the *Rasā'il* are classified under four general themes: mathematical (didactic), physical, psychological, and theological-juridical.

The first volume of the *Rasā'il* is called the “Mathematical-Didactic Part” (*al-Qism al-Riyādī*) and includes fourteen epistles. The first nine titles are: 1. Number its attributes and relations; 2. Geometry; 3. Astronomy and heavenly movements; 4. Geography; 5. Music; 6. Mathematical relations and their influence on spiritual education; 7. The crafts and their objectives; 8. Again on the crafts; and 9. Morality and its divisions. The last five epistles deal with Aristotelian logic and roughly correspond to the four texts which circulated among the Arabs: The *Isagoge* of Porphyry, *De Categoriis*, *Analytica Priora*, and *Analytica Posteriora*.⁴¹ Of this volume, Yovhannēs definitely had access to and made use of Epistles 12 and 14.

The second volume is on the “Physical-Natural Sciences” (*al-Jismāniyāt, al-Ṭabī'iyāt*) and comprises seventeen epistles, under the following titles: 1. Matter, form, motion, time, and space; 2. The

subject of the “world as a large man”; 3. Nature and its true essence; 4. Generation and degeneration; 5. Minerals, metals, their various mixtures and reactions to atmospheric and chemical conditions; 6. Nature and the influence of the heavenly movements on the sublunary world; 7. Plants; 8. Animals, their constitution and allegories involving animals to refer to human relations; 9. The constitution of the human body as the habitat of the soul; 10. Senses and sensible things, the powers of the soul, and the means of cognition; 11. Conception and the influence of the planets on the fetus; 12. On man being a small world and the potentialities of the soul; 13. The divisions of the soul and its relationship to the body; 14. Man’s cognitive powers; 15. Life and death; 16. About the self, life, and death; 17. Languages, symbols, and the differences between them. Of Volume Two, Epistles 1–5 are extensively used by Yovhannēs. Epistles 6, 7, 8, which deal with astrological subjects, allegorical stories, fables, and plants, are completely overlooked. Epistle 9 devoted to the constitution of the human body and the relation of the body to the soul is another favorite subject of Yovhannēs. Epistle 10 has been a major source not only for the *Views*, but also for his later and more mature treatises. This epistle is a summary of the Brethren’s theory of knowledge, or what they call the “powers of the soul,” the role of the senses, and the relation of the senses to the other means of knowledge. Epistle 11 is very briefly referred to in the *Views*. Epistle 12, in turn, was taken very seriously. Yovhannēs was fascinated by the Stoic analogy of man being a small world and the world a large animal/man. He made direct, frequent and, as usual, verbal translations from Epistles 1–5, 9, 10, 12, and 14.

The third volume is the psychological part of the Epistles. It is titled “Spirituals and Intelligibles” (*al-Nafsāniyāt, al-ʿAqlāniyāt*) “and the Soul” (*al-nafs*). It includes ten epistles as follows: 1. On the intelligible beings according to the Pythagoreans; 2. On the principles of reason according to the Brotherhood; 3. On the sayings of the sages [mainly the Stoics] that the world is a large man; 4. On the intellect and intelligible; 5. On the movements of the heavenly bodies; 6. On love; 7. On resurrection; 8. On motion and its categories; 9. On causes and causality; 10. On definitions and symbols. Of Volume Three, Yovhannēs has made use of only three epistles: Epistle 1 on Pythagorean principles, relating to the mind and intelligence. Epistle 3 on the subject of the world being a large man is again taken up with obvious enthusiasm. Epistle 4 on the intellect and intelligibles is again extensively used. Yovhannēs completely overlooked Epistles 5–10.

The fourth volume, which is the theological-juridical part (*al-'ulūm al-nāmūsiyah wa'l-shar'iyah*), includes ten epistles titled as follows: 1. Various faiths and religions; 2. The ways to reach God; 3. The Creed of the Brethren; 4. The ways of living and cooperating with the Brethren on love and piety; 5. The essence of faith and the truly pious; 6. Divine morality, the conditions of prophethood, and the faith of saintly scholars; 7. The call to God; 8. The conduct of spiritual people; 9. Divine Providence; 10. Magic, talismans, and the "evil eye." This volume is completely absent from the *Views* and all other works of Yovhannēs.

V. The Doctrine of Brotherhood and Organizational Matters

A great sympathizer and probably a member of the Qarmāṭian Brethren, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī explains the motives behind the initiative to form a brotherhood:

They [the Brethren] say that the *Shari'ah* has been distorted by the ignorant. It has been contaminated by errors, and philosophy is the only way to purify it. They believe that things will only be restored to their ideal and perfect condition when a balance is struck between Greek philosophy and the *Shari'ah*.⁴²

This is what the *Rasā'il* sets out to do in order to reform the Islamic society and the world, as its authors claim and hope to accomplish. In other words, similar to the Armenian dissidents, the Brethren too were radical reformists and fought the Sunni institutions. They repeatedly expressed their frustration and bitterness at the corruption of Islam because of the 'Abbāsīd establishment. In Platonic style they proposed the project of an ideal republic or in their phrase a "virtuous city" (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*) for the deliverance of the individual and society.

The emphasis on the concept of brotherhood links the *Rasā'il* and the Ismā'īlīs to the Pythagorean, Gnostic and, more importantly, the Ṣūfī traditions in the region. *Ṣafā'* means purity, sincerity, and truth in friendship. In fact, in addition to "brethren of purity," they also called themselves "friends of loyalty," "warriors of justice," and "children of gratitude." The phrase was borrowed from Ibn al-Muqaffa's parable of the captive pigeon in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. c. 756) was a Persian. He translated the fables of Bidpai in Sanskrit (translated into Pahlawi in the sixth century) into Arabic under the title *Kalilah wa Dimnah*.⁴³

This was the argument in favor of brotherhood and friendship: since no one is self-sufficient and the world is full of dangers, brotherhood was the only means to survive through mutual support and friendship. Therefore, the pure joy and consolation provided by brotherly love were superior to all the pleasures of the world. Genuine friendship was the highest good and the ultimate objective, and while everything was subject to decay, change, generation, and degeneration, friendship alone remained permanent.

According to the *Rasā'il*, the brothers constituted a unity, "a single soul in a plurality of bodies,"⁴⁴ and happiness was the consequence of this unity. The concepts of happiness and brotherhood were thus connected, because the latter became the only path leading to the former. "You must know that the best thing that can be granted to man is happiness," advised the authors. Happiness was divided into external and internal; the latter in turn was divided into physical (or that of the body, such as beauty and health) and spiritual (or that of the soul, such as wisdom and morality). External happiness had two aspects: property and relations with other people, like partner, friend, family, teacher, ruler, etc. The most superior of these relations was with a tutor who was knowledgeable about the true nature of all things and believed in final atonement. One should therefore pray to God to deserve and be granted a guide and teacher of this sort.⁴⁵

The concept, rather, the doctrine of the spiritual leader/teacher is central to the teachings of the Brethren. Despite its essential fatalism, the *Rasā'il* considers the mind/soul at birth a "white sheet of paper" (or *waraq abiad*; the Arabs used paper as of the eighth century). Erznkac'i translated the image into "clean-washed parchment." Everything is therefore imprinted on the human mind and permanently stays there.⁴⁶ In *al-Risālah al-Jāmi'ah* there are lengthy epistles dedicated to the senior brothers or the spiritual fathers (the *manktawags* in Armenian), and their junior brothers or disciples.⁴⁷

The brothers met regularly and secretly every twelve days in different places. These meetings had two parts: the first was to satisfy the physical needs and the second the intellectual-spiritual needs. All members had to bathe prior to these meetings. The senior brothers (of all ranks), who were in charge of teaching/leading their junior brothers, were urged to present themselves in their best attire. The following were instructions to them:

Present yourself as the Universal Soul appears to the particular souls, because they [junior disciples, spiritual sons] are your children and you their father. As a father, you are a spirit to them, and they body to you, they are a house for you, and you are the inhabitant as wisdom and spirit descended upon them. . . . Therefore, your presence in these gatherings should inspire awe. . . . Talk to them [junior members], preach, teach, educate and stimulate them to love the sciences as ultimate ideals and aims. Motivate them to seek the knowledge of divine secrets . . . as a supreme pleasure for those who deserve heaven. It is through these mysteries that life on earth is fulfilled and the transition from the sensible world, deliverance from the darkness of the body, bondage to nature, the chains of passion and the sea of matter are achieved. . . . Teach them that the friendship of the brothers is the most glorious way of life. Read them about the life and way of the prophets and the sages, read them the Epistles one by one, from beginning to end, wash them with the water of life. . . . Read them the secret-holy books, and books of esoteric sciences. . . . Be a father, a brother, a healer/physician, and a friend, without arrogance or willfulness. Do not expect from them what is beyond their individual capabilities. . . . If one of your disciples follows evil men or the devil, do not abandon him, but talk to him privately and softly. . . . Warn your disciples against antagonizing any science, or fanatically adhering to any faction/belief. . . . Teach them not to ignore any book, prophet and teaching, because fanatical and negligent attitudes will lead to the downfall of man.⁴⁸

The Brethren believed that even though truth was one and universal, there were a variety of religious and philosophical systems, none of which should be ignored or despised. The same idea was expressed by Yovhannēs in his advice to the brothers of Erznka, as shall be discussed below. The perfect man, for the Brethren must be:

Persian by nationality, Arab by religion, *ḥanafī* by orientation, Mesopotamian by education, Jewish by experience, Christian by lifestyle, Syrian by purity of morals, Greek by knowledge, Indian by introspection, and *Ṣūfī* by conduct.⁴⁹

The hierarchical system of the Brethren is interesting in that it seems to have synthesized existing models (among the Pythagoreans and others) and elaborated a system based on their metaphysics and political reform project. The model was adopted by various types of professional and non-professional coalitions and brotherhoods later on. The system was hierarchical and had four ranks:

- The rank of novices (*al-ikhwān al-abrār*, ages 15–30) is for those who show keenness of understanding, purity of heart, and intellectual dynamism.
- The rank of leaders (*al-ikhwān al-akhyār al-fuḍalāʾ*, ages 30–40) is for those who have kindness, intellectual maturity, and magnanimity of the spirit.
- The rank of magistracy or kingship (*al-ikhwān al-fuḍalāʾ al-kirām*, ages 40–50) is for those who are called upon to demand obedience; they are distinguished by intellectual and moral strength.
- The prophetic rank of brothers who have angelic powers (*al-ikhwān dhaū quwwah malakiah*) is for brethren at age fifty. They have the “visual perception of the truth” and the privileges of ascending to the “kingdom of heaven” and propinquity to God.⁵⁰

Very early in his career Yovhannēs had the good fortune, or made a wise and bold choice, to assimilate whatever the *Rasāʾil* had to offer. This esoteric compendium of the sciences became a school for him, and from the beginning he managed to reconcile the Brethren’s system with his Christian background, as will be discussed in some detail in the following chapters.

Notes

1. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 189.
2. Ibid., 191.
3. Ibid., 203.
4. Ibid., 327.
5. Ibid., 328.
6. For the city of Erznka see: Armēnuhi Srapean, *Yovhannēs Erznkacʾi* (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1958).
 - L. Xaçʾikean, “1280 Tʾwakanin Erznkayum Kazmakerpwac Ełbayrutʾiwnē” [The Brotherhood Organized in Erznka in the year 1280], *Telekagir of the Academy of Sciences* 12 (1951): 73–84.
 - Y. Kʾurtean, *Eriza ew Ekeleacʾ Gawarē*, vol. I [Erznka and the province of Ekeleacʾ], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1953).
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 11. Pałtasarean, *Yovhannēs Erznkac'in*, 11.
 12. Srapean, *Yovhannēs Erznkac'i*, 13–14; Pałtasarean, *Yovhannēs Erznkac'in*, 19.
 13. See a summary of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: Hrač'ey Ačārean, *Ibn-i Bat't'ūt'a* (Erevan, Erevan State University Publications, 1940); Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited the city in 1330 and says that most of the inhabitants were Armenian Muslims, and the Turks spoke Turkish. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta-1325–1354*. Translated by H. A. R. Gibb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 2: 437.
 14. K'urtean, *Eriza*, 285.
 15. Kostandin Erznkac'i has a poem dedicated to a "brother" called Baron Amir Polin Kalaymach, who in 1336 copied a collection of Kostandin's poems. See the Mxit'arist Library Ms. #103, Venice, fols. 3–181, Colophon: 181–82. For the poem see *Kostandin Erznkac'i, Taler* [Poems], Edited by A. Srapean, (Erevan: SSR GA Publications, 1962), 195–98.
 16. K'urtean, *Eriza*, 272.
 17. Mājid Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 163.
 18. *Ibid.*, 164.
 19. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1970), 373.
 20. See his *Dīwān: Siqṭ al-Zand*. Edited by Šhākir Shuqayr (Beirut: 1884), 112, I. 15, 104, II. 4–5; Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 448–49.

21. Ibid., 449.
22. Ibid., 373.
23. Ibid., 443–44.
24. Ibid., 444, n. 3.
25. Ibid., 444.
26. Ibid., 445.
27. See W. Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismā'īlī Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952); *Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismā'ilism* (London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1933) and S. M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983).
28. Ivanow, *Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismā'ilism*, 27.
29. S. M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 260–61.
30. Ibid., 204.
31. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 446
32. See Muṣṭafā Ghālib, *Ta'rikh al-Da'wlah al-Ismā'īliyah mundh ul-Bidāyah ḥattā 'Aṣrunā al-Hāḍir* [The History of the Ismā'īlī Mission from the Beginning to the Present Time], (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqazah al-'Arabiyah li'l-Ta'lif wa'l-Tarjamah, wa'l-Nashr bi-Sūriyah, 1955).
33. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 447.
34. Ibid., 448.
35. *Risālat Jāmi'at al-Jāmi'ah*. Edited by 'Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut: Dār al-Nashr li'l-Jāmi'iyyin, 1959).
36. Dadoyan, *The Views and the Islamic Sources*, 60.
37. *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4 vols. Edited by B. Bustānī (Beirut: Dār Beirut wa Dār Ṣādiq, 1957), vol. IV, Epistle 6, 127.
38. *Rasā'il*, vol. I, Epistle 1, 43.
39. *Rasā'il*, vol. IV, Epistle 4, 41–42.
40. Ibid., 42.
41. Fakhry, *A History*, 167.
42. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Al-Imtā' wa'l-Mu'anasah* [Enjoyment and Intimacy], (Cairo: Lijnat al-Ta'lif wa'l-Tarjamah wa'l-Nashr, 1939–1944), vol. II, 4.
43. *Rasā'il*, vol. I, Epistle 2, 100.
44. Ibid., vol. IV, Epistle 4, 48.
45. Ibid., 49–50.
46. Ibid., 51.
47. *Al-Risālah al-Jāmi'ah*. Edited by Jamīl Ṣalībā (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Taraqqī, 1942), Epistle 52, 396.
48. Ibid. 395–404.
49. *Rasā'il*, vol. II, Epistle 8, 376.
50. Ibid., vol. IV, Epistle 3, 35; M. Fakhry, *A History*, 165–66.

Secularization of Knowledge and Sciences: An Armenian Summary of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*

**I. Yovhannēs Erzncac'i and Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' as
Model for His I Tačkac' Imastasirac' Groc' K'aleal Bank'
(Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers)**

Despite its intriguing title, *Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers* (*Views*), and probably because of it, the identity of the *Islamic Philosophers* and their “views” were eclipsed in Armenian scholarship. There is a more serious problem: despite the clear message in the title that the book is simply a collection of ideas gathered (*k'aleal*) from the writings of Islamic philosophers (*tačkac' imastasirac' groc'*) and the constant use of the phrase “they say,” this odd manuscript was taken as an original work. Many aspects of it were left unresolved, such as the date of writing, motives, circumstances, and the channels through which Yovhannēs had access to an esoteric text such as the *Rasā'il*. Furthermore, the mature works of Yovhannēs have not been reviewed in the light of his adoption of ideas from heterodox Islam. This and similar lags in Armenian scholarship not only caused inaccuracies, but also obscured an entire world of close interactions in and through Erzncaka. My monograph published in 1991, mentioned in the previous chapter, was the first to trace Yovhannēs's sources, or rather, his models not only for the *Views* but for his entire literary career as well.

The *Views* is not a coherent text. It is a collection of notes with no structure or sequence, written by a complete beginner to the philosophical and natural sciences of the day. His knowledge of Classical Armenian as well as Arabic is elementary. Only years later Yovhannēs

assimilated some aspects of the sophisticated and eclectic system of the Brethren's thought.

The influence of the *Rasā'il* on the mature works of Yovhannēs is clear, as demonstrated in some detail in this chapter. Since most of his works are still unpublished, I selected the philosophical sections from twenty-four works (still in manuscripts) and categorized and published them as an appendix to my monograph.¹ Also, an otherwise chaotic collection of notes and ideas, the text of the *Views* is thematically re-organized and re-published in the same monograph.²

Yovhannēs was born in Erznka during early 1230s.³ He was nicknamed Bluz (or Čluz) for his small stature or his blue eyes, depending on the local dialects. He claimed to be related to the ruling family of Ekeleac', the province of Erznka. In his late twenties, a relatively late stage in his life, he entered the great Monastery of St. Minas on *Sepuh Leṛ* (Sepuh Mountain) near the city and was ordained *vardapet* (celibate priest; the term also indicates a doctoral diploma) in his thirties.

Yovhannēs' first sermons and treatises were written in 1272, and no works are known to exist prior to these, except the *Views*, as I demonstrate. In 1280, and at the request of the Church/state of Erznka, he wrote a two-part constitution for the brotherhood of Erznka. Again, his source and model was Caliph al-Nāṣir's futuwwa reform literature and program. He makes no reference anywhere to the identity of his Islamic sources. Around the year 1284, Yovhannēs made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and visited Cilicia on his way back. After his return to Erznka, he withdrew to the Monastery of St. Minas where he wrote most of his works. In 1290, he went back to Cilicia, where he died at the Monastery of Akneṛ in 1293, just after the fall of the Catholicosai See and the loss of the Fortress at Hṛomkla to the Mamlūks. His remains were taken to Erznka at a later date. In a colophon written at the Monastery of Akneṛ in Cilicia, he described the last years of his life and mentioned that he left his hometown and family because of "troubles" by "*aylazgi*"s (or other races, a term used for Muslims). He wrote:

Unpleasant things happened to the Christians . . . and I left my mother, brother and students hoping to find a better life . . . and came to the land of Armenians [*erkirn hayoc'* or Cilicia in 1291]. There reigned [King] Het'um [II, 1289–1296], the eldest son and heir of King Lewon [II, 1269–1289] a lover of knowledge and learning. . . . I hoped to find peace for the rest of my days.⁴ [Elsewhere he says:]

And I, humble [*nwasts*] Yovhannēs, roamed for two years homeless and restless, physically broken up and desperate. The enemies of the cross [Mamlūks] took the impregnable fortress [*anarik amroc'n* or the Catholicosai See at Hromkla in 1293] . . . and scattered the treasures and holy scripts. . . . In my miserable condition where could I find a safe place to rest permanently?⁵

The *Views* is preserved by only one copy made in the seventeenth century (kept in Mat. Ms. # 6670, fols. 91a–111a). It is a rather small text of approximately 6,000 words. As Yovhannēs says too, it is just a collection of “*ban*”s, word, thoughts (*ban*, also used for logos, *banaxos*, means speaker, lecturer). The entire text is written as a report, where Yovhannēs often begins by the phrase “they say” or “it is said by them.” With the exception of Islamic theology, law, magic, and love (*‘ishq*), he has directly translated—in almost vernacular Armenian and poor philosophical vocabulary—passages on logic, epistemology, psychology, politics, metaphysics, plants, minerals, alloys, illnesses, agriculture, astrology, cosmology, etc. In general, various themes from different disciplines intersect each other and are resumed elsewhere out of context, making the reading of the text an extremely difficult task. Unlike his other works of later periods, the vocabulary, grammar, and style of the *Views* are elementary. While both philosophical concepts and terms had fully developed during the thirteenth century, Yovhannēs seems to be unfamiliar to both, and uses Arabic terms in inconsistent transliterations. There are almost fifty such Arabic and some Persian terms in the *Views*.

Otherwise, as demonstrated below, there can be no doubt that, written at a very early stage in the life of Yovhannēs, the *Views* was the earliest known summary of *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Safā’* in another language and for a Christian audience. To give the reader an idea about the content of the *Views*, the following is the outline of the reclassified text, as published in my above-mentioned monograph:⁶

1. Classification of sciences
2. Epistemology and logic
 - a. The four means of cognition
 - b. Demonstration and proof
3. The nature of man—man’s knowledge of himself
 - a. The three manners of self-knowledge
 - b. The soul on the scale of emanation
 - c. The “powers” of the soul

4. Physical sciences and metaphysics
 - a. The bodies and the movement of the heavenly bodies
 - b. Metals, minerals, and their mixtures and states
 - c. Form and matter: matter and its kinds; matter on the scale of emanation
5. Theory of emanation
6. Cosmology, astronomy, astrology—analogies between the world and man

The *Rasā'il* left a deep impact on the intellectual development of Yovhannēs, who used it as a reference in all his later works. In turn, for their informative nature, encyclopedic spirit, and broad scope, his works were widely read in medieval Armenian seminaries. Thus, through him the *Rasā'il* became one of the factors in the secularization of Armenian sciences.⁷

II. Comparative Study of the *Views* and the *Rasā'il*

The comparative study, below, of the texts of the *Views* and the *Rasā'il* is based on the thematic classification of the edited version of the *Views* in my above-mentioned monograph. From Volume One of the *Rasā'il* on mathematical and logical sciences, Yovhannēs uses Epistles 12 and 14 that roughly summarize Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* and *Analytica Posteriora*. The first eleven epistles are primarily mathematical. Numbers, proportions, and the number "1" in particular are discussed. These are the bases of the Brethren's metaphysics and theology. According to the Brethren, all numbers and things proceed from the number "1," which signifies singularity and unity. According to them, numbers and proportions are designed by God to reflect the universal system. Just as the first principle of numbers is the number "1," so is God the first principle of the universe. Everything starts from God/the One as pure substance. Number "2" is the universal reason (*aql*), by the addition of the second single digit. The universal/celestial soul (*nafs*) follows as number "3" or the third level. Finally, from the movements of the soul comes primary matter as the fourth stage of emanation. The number "4" reflects the hierarchical creation/emanation.⁸

Many epistles in the *Rasā'il* are devoted to mathematical relations and proportions that reflect harmonies in nature. The aim, says Fakhry, "is to demonstrate how the properties of numbers are the prototype of the properties of things." Thus, in order to grasp the nature and order of things, one must comprehend the mathematical infrastructure

of the whole being. Mathematics is the basis of philosophy and in the case of the Brethren, their metaphysics and theology. To summarize these ideas, Yovhannēs, who at the time was not familiar with basic mathematics, philosophy, and appropriate vocabulary, could not have grasped the link between mathematics, metaphysics, and theology. But he seems to have seen that the Brethren's approach contradicted Christian cosmology and the theory of spontaneous creation. However, in his two summaries of the Brethren's theory of emanation (*ḥayḍ*) he briefly alluded to the metaphysical significance of numbers.

A. Classification of the Sciences

Hierarchical and generally pyramidal thinking typified the Brethren's system in all respects. They presented the *Rasā'il* as a partial disclosure of a fuller wisdom/vision that will follow. Knowledge and the sciences, in general, marked man's ascent into higher knowledge and higher states of being. Knowledge, therefore, was a vehicle of deliverance and salvation. Their classification of the sciences reflected this Neoplatonic-Pythagorean approach. Yet, even though Yovhannēs was fascinated by this approach to the sciences, a recurring theme in the *Rasā'il*,⁹ he marginalized the mystical role of knowledge (the subject is discussed in folios 103b and 104a of the *Views*).

The *Rasā'il* proposes three major divisions of the sciences: mathematical-didactic ('*ulūm riḳāḍīyah*), religious-juridical ('*ulūm shar'īyah*), and philosophical ('*ulūm falsafīyah*). The philosophical sciences are:

- Mathematics: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, geography
- Logic: poetics, rhetoric, dialectics, argumentation, art of sophistical argumentation
- Physics: principles of physical beings, science of the heavens, generation-degeneration meteorology, minerals, botany, zoology
- Metaphysics-Theology: theosophy, science of intelligible-spiritual beings, politics-administration ('*ilm al-siāsah*): prophetic, royal, scientific, personal, spiritual

Bypassing the mathematical and religious sections, and without an introduction, Yovhannēs moves directly to the philosophical part. He uses the word *usum* (or learning, education in Armenian) both for mathematics (*riḳāḍīyāt* in Arabic) and for '*ilm* (learning, knowledge, science in Arabic). He says that after mathematics (*usumnakan*), arithmetic (*hamarotakan*) is the first thing to study, then comes "*Ellides*"

(transliterated from Arabic *Iqlīdis* or Euclid, while he should have said *Ewklides* in Armenian) meaning geometry, then astronomy “by which we know the world above” (*verin ašxarh*), then comes logic (*banawor-akan usum*). He omits music that the Brethren consider very important. Yovhannēs then moves to logic (*manṭiqiyāt*, fol. 103b). It is the second division of the philosophical sciences in the *Rasā’il*. Having no clue about Greek logical sciences, and without even mentioning the five branches of logic, as per the *Rasā’il*, he points to the essentially rational nature of man and the benefits of sound reasoning and speech.

The physical sciences (*ṭabī’iyāt* in Arabic) constitute the third division of the philosophical sciences and are in turn divided into seven, one of which is medicine. Yovhannēs simply writes, “Then come [the sciences of] nature, healing, division of bodies, medications and causes for ailments.”¹⁰

Concerning metaphysics-theology (*al-‘ulūm al-ilāhiyah*) in the Aristotelian sense, the fourth division of the philosophical sciences, we read in the *Views*: “Then come the universal [*endhanrakann*] and demonstrative [*apac’učakan*] sciences.”¹¹ Yovhannēs probably means that demonstrative reasoning is a tool on this level of knowledge. Using three Arabic terms he says:

... one reaches the *mujarrad* [absolute, universal] *johar* [essence?] and the *aṣl* [origin/root] of things, then to the *mujarrad* Soul, and the Mind, and from them he reaches [to the cognition of] the holiness of God and the resurrection [?], and only then he truly acquires knowledge of the world. These constitute their [Islamic philosophers’] view of the [classification of the] sciences.¹²

In the *Rasā’il*, the knowledge of God is the ultimate objective of all sciences. The following passage is just one of many in this respect:

The purpose of physical sciences is to [assist man] rise into the metaphysical or theological sciences ... into the knowledge of the true *jawhar* [essence] of the soul, its origin, and its relationship to the body and its end/ideal. ... As man is delegated to inquire into the nature of God, the way to Him is through self-knowledge and through the entire scale of beings.¹³

Yovhannēs has another discussion of the classification of the sciences:

The first [science] is *radat* [riyāḍiyāt, or mathematics in Arabic] that is divided into four arts [*arhest*]: arithmetics [*hamarotakan*],

geography, astrology, music; secondly there is *banaworut'iwn* [logic, not *banaworakan gitut'iwn* as described earlier], thirdly *bnabanakan* [physical sciences], thirdly [must be fourthly], theological, and there was great wisdom in the analysis of numbers, whose *xasiat'* [*khawāṣ*, attributes in Arabic] were [first] discovered by the *Fit'āloros hakim* [or Pythagoras the Sage, as the Arabs called him, must have said Putakoras in Armenian].¹⁴

It is obvious that the author of these pages had not read any philosophical text in Armenian. At the time, the works of Pythagoras and Euclid circulated in excellent translations. Yovhannēs simply rewrites the names as they appear in Arabic, including the word *hak'im* (*hakim* or sage in Arabic). In his later works he developed a more erudite vocabulary. This and many more examples support my suggestion that the *Views* was written at a very early stage in the life and education of Yovhannēs, most probably even before he entered the Monastery of St. Minas. According to legend, his father, who had a financially good position and a business, wanted him to take over. But his passion for learning led him to the Church, as he himself tells later on. While he was in his father's shop and in general, he could have easily met Ismā'īlī missionaries/merchants in Erznka. As mentioned, this movement was instrumental in the distribution of the *Rasā'il* in several forms.

B. Epistemology and Logic

Two themes from the *Views* can be brought under this title: the "four means of cognition" and "concerning proof." The *Rasā'il* defines five means of cognition: senses, reason, demonstration, intuition, and revelation.¹⁵ They gradually develop and only at age fifteen the rational powers of man become functional. At age thirty, man can make sound judgments, and only at age fifty, he may develop the highest forms of cognition.

Yovhannēs uses the word "*fk'ril*" (*fikr* in Arabic means idea, mind, *fakkara* means to think) for cognition, and explains that it has four ways: *xelac'n imac'mamb* (rational understanding or reason), *p'orj* (experimentation), *zgayut'iwn* (sense perception) and *hawat* (belief, faith).¹⁶ Demonstration and intuition are omitted, and experimentation is added. Knowledge by experimentation is a favorite subject for Yovhannēs. The omission of intuition or the mystical way (typical of the Brethren's elite) is an indication of the reservations Yovhannēs had toward the esoteric nature of the *Rasā'il*. In another context,

Yovhannēs returns to “demonstration,” and makes a reference to the gradual development of the cognitive powers.

Concerning demonstration (*apac'uyt'*) there are three ways of human cognition. First by the senses and sensibility, that are shared by adults, children, and animals; second, by rational understanding, which only the adults have, and third demonstration, which is particular to philosophers.¹⁷

This is almost identical to the following from the *Rasā'il*:

Man's cognition is accomplished in three ways: first through the senses, and it is common to all men, children and animals. The second is the way of reason, and it distinguishes man from animals. The third is the way of demonstration, and only a group of philosophers are distinguished by it after being trained in mathematical and logical studies.¹⁸

In another section on demonstration, Yovhannēs shows a very general understanding of the concepts but a complete unfamiliarity to Aristotelian logic and epistemology. What he presents is a layman's reading and summary of the most complicated aspect of Greek philosophy. For example, he does not quite follow the logical significance and role of syllogism (which he transcribes as *qias*, *tias*, *xias*). He also resorts to examples to explain the role of each cognitive means, and says that demonstration is an activity of reason or “*fk'ril*,” as he puts it. The senses assist us to see only few miles ahead, while we arrive at the knowledge of the distances of the *falak'* (the heavenly bodies), for example, by intellectual powers and not the senses.¹⁹

C. Man's Knowledge of Himself in Accordance with His Nature

The “science of man” (*ilm al-insān*) is perhaps one of the most intriguing themes of the *Rasā'il*. It is a synthesis of Neoplatonic ideas, Islam, and oriental mysticism. As parts follow the whole in the emanational universe, man becomes a miniature universe or a microcosm, with the same constitution as the large world or the universe. As such, he is subject to and emulates the motions of the larger world.

The knowledge of the self and the three manners of self-knowledge—The *Rasā'il* takes the Greek-Socratic principle of “know thyself” as a starting point:

The beginning of the sciences is man's knowledge of himself, and self-knowledge is accomplished in three ways: the first is the knowledge

of the body and all matters related to it; the second concerns the knowledge of the soul and its attributes independent of the body; the third is the study of the unified existence of the soul and the body and all the attributes of this condition.²⁰

We find a verbal translation of the above in the *Views*.²¹ Yovhannēs elaborates the idea and declares that man is also known in nine respects. Next, he discusses the knowledge of the body and almost literally reiterates the ideas of the *Rasā'il* on the constitution of the human body (four elements, nine *jawhars*, ten natures, ten organs, twelve orifices, etc.).²²

The constitution of the body is a favorite subject in the *Views* and the sources are Epistles 9–14 of the second volume of the *Rasā'il* (on Sciences of the Bodies and Natural Sciences, *al-Jismāniyāt*, *al-Ṭabī'iyāt*). There are several passages that are verbally and awkwardly translated in the *Views*. For the second way of self-knowledge through the soul, Yovhannēs repeats the three ways of knowledge by the senses, reason, and demonstration.²³ For the third way, or looking at man as the union of body and soul, he introduces the scales, using the Arabic word *daraj* (step, stage), of emanation and indulges in the Brethren's psychology.

The dualism of the soul and body and the powers of each—The *Rasā'il* defines the soul as a simple, immaterial substance that is ethereal and immortal. It has cognitive powers and as such is a potentially knowing agent.²⁴ On two pages (fols. 105a, b, 107a, b) and in a rather unorganized manner, Yovhannēs reproduces the psychological ideas of the Brethren, who divide the soul into three parts, after the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition:

1. The vegetative-instinctive level is that of the passions and appetites. It resembles a “house of evil spirits,” the seat is the liver, and corporeal love distinguishes its objects.
2. The sensitive-spirited part, also called the “human” level, is situated in the heart and its objects are authority, war, and conquest.
3. The rational part is closer to the angelic level; it is situated in the brain. Its objects are morality and knowledge and it rules over the other two parts. The rational soul has five powers: imaginative (*mutakhayy-ilah*), discursive (*mufakkirah*), conservational (*hāfīzazh*), expressive (*nāṭiqah*), active-productive (*fa'ālah*, *ṣāni'ah*).²⁵

The *Rasā'il* also defines seven “powers” of the body: absorption, digestion, repulsion, nutrition, growth, simulation, preservation.²⁶ We find the same passage in a very chaotic summary in the *Views*.²⁷ The

Stoic analogy between the universe as a large man/animal and man as a small universe appears repeatedly both in the *Rasā'il* and the *Views*.²⁸

D. Physical Sciences and Metaphysics

The second volume of the *Rasā'il* is devoted to physics and natural sciences, and Yovhannēs gave priority to these themes both in the *Views* and his later works. But in the *Views* his comprehension and summaries are confused. The *Rasā'il* defines nature as a “power” (*quwwah*) of the universal soul. Energy is released from the latter and diffused into the sublunary world, activating/moving everything from potentiality to actuality. The physical world thus becomes the body, as it were, of the Universal Soul. The sublunary world is governed only by the law of generation and decay.

The physical bodies are divided into four: the first is simply the four elements, or the “mothers” (*ummahāt*), and the other three are the animals, plants, and minerals. A body has an essence that is called *jawhar*; it is the equivalent of form and has certain attributes (*a'rād*, or *ṣifāt*).

According to the *Rasā'il*, the five major concepts of physics are: matter (*hayūllah*), form (*ṣūrah*), motion (*ḥarakah*), time (*zamān*), place (*makān*). Matter is defined as that which is capable of taking any form and is divided into four: matter as raw material for the crafts; the four elements; the universal body, which is the totality of the universe; primary matter, which is conceptual and not sensible with dimensions.²⁹

Form is defined as essence; it is the “shape” that matter receives, and the principle of differentiation. Otherwise, according to the *Rasā'il* all matter is one, varying only in degrees of purity. We find this discussion in the *Views* literally taken from the *Rasā'il*.³⁰ To explain the relation between matter, substance, quantity, and quality, the latter brings the familiar example of the cotton and the shirt and Yovhannēs almost entirely copies this passage in the *Views*.³¹ He presents the relationship of form to matter and vice versa as follows: “The body (*marmin*) is of two parts, matter and kind.” He uses the word *tesak* for form (instead of *jew*).

Matter, he says, is that which takes dimensions and shapes and has four kinds, they are: matter as “raw material” for the crafts; “matter of nature” (*niwt' bnut'ean*), which means the four elements and everything else in the sublunary world. He explains that it is from this sort of matter that animals, plants, and mineral come forth; “universal matter” (*niwt' ėndhanur*) that involves everything and their mixtures; finally,

“first/primary matter” (*niwt’ arājin*), which is a “simple and intelligible *johar*, that does not fall under the senses, and is prior to all things . . . has no dimensions . . . it is a simple kind [now meaning genus].”³²

Generation and Decay—Yovhannēs has great difficulty in grasping the Brethren’s cyclical theory of generation and decay, which he translates as *linelut’iwn* and *apakanut’iwn*. He explains it as a transition from one state into another, in which only form decays but matter does not. In other words, decay is simply the disintegration of the form. He discusses seven types of decay, probably counting the four elements or “mothers” and the three “offsprings” that are animals, plants, and minerals. At any rate, these passages in the *Views* are ambiguous and riddled with linguistic errors.³³

The *Rasā’il* devotes over ten pages to the subject of generation and decay from Epistle 3 of Volume Two.³⁴ The basic idea is that there is a cyclical and perpetual transition from one form into another. This transition happens through two mixtures (*khalit*): vapor (*bukhār*) and liquids (*uṣārāt*).³⁵ Generation is the coming forth of the genus, and degeneration is its disappearance. There are examples of the process in which the four elements turn into plants, fruits, food, animal, and back to the elements.³⁶ According to the *Rasā’il*, only the sublunary world is subject to the cycle of generation and decay. In other words, change occurs in the four elements/“mothers” (*ummahāt*), animals, plants, and minerals. In turn, Yovhannēs gives similar examples, but on a more elementary level.³⁷

E. The Principle of Causality and Theory of Emanation

The Brethren adopt the Aristotelian dictum of knowledge through causes and prove the existence of God as First Cause or Principle. This concept of causality was easily adapted to the teleological system of Ismā’ilism. The idea that all things have causes and are oriented toward set goals recurs repeatedly. In the *Rasā’il*, basic Aristotelian teleology and theory of causes (formal, material, efficient, final) are explained as part of the Brethren metaphysics.³⁸ Yovhannēs seems to have understood the basic idea of causality as expounded in the *Rasā’il* in a simplified form and summarized it as well as he could.³⁹ At one point he says: “All things that exist have a beginning and an end. The beginning is the existence of things and the end is the dissolution of the parts.” Speaking of causes he says: “Every substance has four definitions (*sahman*): cause, matter, action and actor” (*batčar, niwt’ nergorcut’iwn, gorcoṭ*).⁴⁰

The doctrine of emanation (*fayḍ*) is central to the metaphysics of the Brethren. But in the *Views*, emanation is almost identified with creation (*ararč'agorcut'awn*).⁴¹ The word *fayḍ* does not appear in transliteration, nor in its classic Armenian equivalents such as *artazelum* or *zelum*. Instead, Yovhannēs uses the word *c'aytum* (ejection, sprouting). For the stages or levels of emanation, he often uses the word *taraj* (or step, stage, in Arabic). He has a general comprehension of the theory of emanation—as expounded in the *Rasā'il*—but with some hesitation about the creative activity of the “Universal Mind” and its relationship to the God of monotheism. The *Rasā'il* has many versions of the doctrine of emanation, the following is just one from Volume Three, Epistle 1:

You must know (*i'lam*) that . . . the first thing God created . . . [was] the Active Intellect [*al-'aql al-fa'āl*], [which] is a simple spiritual essence [*jawhar basīṭ rūḥānī*], perfect and good, and in which existed the Forms of all things. From this *jawhar* [essence/substance] emanated [*fāḍa*] another *jawhar* beneath it [in rank] in the universal order [*al-rutbah al-kulliyah*], then from this [universal] Soul [*nafs*] sprang/was released [*inba'atha*] another *jawhar* called Prime/First Matter [*al-hayullah al-ūlah*]. Prime Matter received [*qabila*] the dimensions [*al-miqdār*] that are length, width and height. Thus it became an absolute body [*jism muṭlaq*] and it is the Second Matter [*al-hayullah al-thānīyah*]. This body then took a spherical shape, which is the most superior of shapes, and this was the world [*'alam*] of the heavenly spheres [*aflāk*] and the planets [*kawākib*]. . . . From the beginning of the enveloping sphere [*al-falak al-muḥīṭ*] to the end of the planet Moon, there are nine spheres arranged concentrically . . . then beneath/after the sphere of the Moon, there are the four elements, and the earth is the center and of all the bodies in the universe [*jarm*, transliterated as *jamr* in the *Views*] it is the most dense in substance.⁴²

In a more schematic form, the nine-step emanational system of the *Rasā'il* is as follows:

1. The one God creator (*al-bārī*) from whom ideas/forms (*ṣuwar wa a'yān*) emanate into
2. The Universal-Active Intellect (*al 'aql al-fa'āl al-kullī*), which receives and diffuses the forms into
3. The Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kullīyah*), which is the soul of the world. From here emanates
4. The Primal or First Matter (*al-hayūllah al-ūla*), which is followed by
5. Nature or the all-enveloping sphere (*al-ṭabī'ah* or *al-falak al-muḥīṭ*), also called the “throne” (*al-ʿarsh*), which is followed by

6. The Universal Body or the Second Matter (*al-jism al-kullī al-muṭlaq, al-hayūllah al-thānīyah*), also called the sphere of the fixed stars, or the “Chair” (*al-kursī*). Then comes
7. The Sphere of the seven moving stars or planets (*ḥalak al-kawākib al-mutaḥarrikah*). They are Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Sun, and Moon.⁴³
8. The world of generation and decay or of the four foundations (*‘ālam al-kawn wa’l-fasād, or al-arkān al-arba‘ah*) of which all things are born as though from “mothers”
9. The particular bodies or the “offsprings” (*al-mawludāt or al-ajsām al-juz’īyah*) from man to animals, plants, and minerals. Man is the noblest of these “offsprings” because he gathers in his constitution all the meanings of the universe. He embodies all the elements—from the densest to the purest, which is the soul. This is man; he is a “small world” and the world is a “large man.”⁴⁴

Yovhannēs summarizes the doctrine of emanation in two passages,⁴⁵ the first is as follows in verbal translation:

It is important to know that the first movement of the heavens and the planets into the earth are caused by the powers of the universal soul [*‘endhanur hogi*, or the Active Intellect] . . . which bring forth three [types of being] that are minerals, plants and animals . . . the first step [*daraj*] of all goodness [*bareac*] was the “1” of the numbers. Similarly, like the “1,” the intellect [*xelk*] was the beginning and the cause of other things. And as the number “3” follows the “2,” so does the Soul comes after the Intellect. The fourth [step] is Matter [*niwt*], the fifth is Nature [*bnut’iwn*], the sixth is the Simple Body [*parz marmin*], the seventh is the *Falak*, the eighth the Four Elements, the ninth the Offsprings [*cnund*]. “9” is the end of the numbers and the beginning of beings. The first matter is the cause of the Soul and the First Intellect is *johar* [essence?] to God, and the Intellect brought forth the *navs* [*nafs* or soul], and the *navs* brought about a *johar* that has length, width and depth. The Intellect is the creation of God, and as the point has no parts, similarly, from God [the point] like a line extends the *nafs* into the intellect and the latter to the body. . . . And thus from the highest *ḥalak* that embraces the bodies, to the *mark’az* [center in Arabic] of the earth. . . . Whatever descends upon man is a *johar* of the Universal Soul, in turn the latter receives a *johar* that is a power that sprouts/is ejected [*c’aytum*] from the Intellect and descends upon it.⁴⁶

Yovhannēs then presents his own interpretation of the emanational system. Similar to the universe, he explains, people have two powers (*zorut’iwn*), the intellect and the soul.⁴⁷ This is the only time *c’aytum* is used for emanation or *fayḍ*. Yovhannēs seems to understand that the Brethren’s Neoplatonic-Pythagorean theory of emanation is the basic

grid upon which their system is constructed. But even though this esoteric work was the single most significant influence on the formation of Yovhannēs's thought, there is no indication in his entire literature that he was aware of the fact that Ismā'īlism was a distinct religious-philosophical-political movement with a project for which the *Rasā'il* was adopted as its theoretical ground. He approached emanation as an alternative philosophic-scientific theory of creation, and never referred to it in the future in his later works.

F. Cosmology, Astronomy, Astrology—The Analogy between the World and Man

Astrology and astronomy fascinated Yovhannēs and almost quarter of the *Views* is dedicated to these subjects. Later on in his life he wrote two cosmological treatises based on the *Rasā'il* and whatever was available during the thirteenth century in his circles. Minerals, metals, stones, alloys, alchemy, and all sorts of details about illnesses and cures fascinated him, and his work turned out to be a miniature and modest replica of the *Rasā'il* minus the Islamic character. In general, there is a conspicuous omission of everything that is even remotely connected to Islamic doctrines, law, and culture in general. The entire fourth volume on jurisprudence and theology is absent, as are many epistles and chapters in the other volumes. The word Muslim or *tajik* is used once, only in the title.

III. The Philosophical Writings of Yovhannēs
Erznkac'i in Light of the *Rasā'il*

Yovhannēs seems to have been introduced to the public as a newly ordained *vardapet* by a sermon he read in the district of *T'il* in 1272. This is a rather short text but written in far superior language than what we find in the *Views*. As mentioned, he never wrote any strictly philosophical treatises, but whatever he wrote as passages in mostly theological treatises and homilies can be classified under the following themes: philosophy and classification of the sciences; concept of man, his constitution and status; the soul and body relationship; theory of knowledge; theory of morals, social-political philosophy; and cosmology and astronomy.⁴⁸

A. Philosophy and Classification of the Sciences

Yovhannēs mentioned the Brethren's classification of the sciences only in the *Views*. After his graduation from the seminary he adopted

the medieval Armenian tradition and the basic Aristotelian division of the sciences. In his *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i* (Concerning the Teachings of the Prophet David), he divided the theoretical sciences into physics, mathematics, and theology (and/or metaphysics in the Aristotelian system). There are three "worlds" (*ašxarh*) or manners of existence: material-sensible (*zgalī*); intelligible (*imanalī*) with God as its apex; and an intermediate world which is man, who is the "union" (*miut'iwn*) of the material and intelligible worlds. He is thus a "link" (*šalkap*) between intelligible and sensible manners of existence. He makes an attempt to define the sciences in their relationships to these levels of existence:

The natural sciences (*bnabanakan*) are instruments to know the sensible world and its "creatures" (*ararac*). Mathematical sciences (*usumnakan*) are proper to man who is [simultaneously] a sensible and intelligible "world," being a union of the two. Theology/metaphysics and physics are united in mathematics. Physics is proper to the material objects and we apprehend the intelligible by subjective [*ent'akayakan*, probably non-sensible] and abstract thinking [*makamtacut'iwn*], such as God, the angels and all that belongs to the intelligible world.⁴⁹

In the same text on the Prophet David, he reiterates the Aristotelian definition of the origin of philosophy as "wonderment, amazement" (*sk'anč'ac'um*).⁵⁰ In this text and others, Yovhannēs identifies the sciences or knowledge as "enlightenment" (*lusaworum*), because they will save man from darkness. In *I Žam Surb Pataragin* (During/at the Time of Holy Mass) he says:

The darkest of all darknesses, is the darkness of ignorance, of which originated sin, disbelief, desperation and dark deeds.⁵¹

B. Concept of Man: Constitution and Status—The Soul and the Body

Following the theme of "man" in the *Rasā'il*, Yovhannēs says that the beginning of all cognition is self-knowledge, then comes the definition of man as soul, body, and the union of the two. All other sciences of man are based on this outlook.⁵² Indeed, this view of man is applied in all his subsequent works. A good example is his sermon on the Prophet David, where he almost reiterates his discussion in the *Views* but in a much more organized form and better language. By virtue of his position, and as a link between the divine-intelligible and material-sensible, he says, man is a privileged being because he embodies the

entire universe in him. Like someone who has a vision of the whole, man is “king” (*t’agawor*) over nature and himself.⁵³ In another didactic sermon written for wider audiences, Yovhannēs gives a more accessible version and invests on the contrast between the drives of the soul, those of the body, and the moral significance of each.⁵⁴ In this context too he uses the analogy of the *Rasā’il* between man (as a small world) and the universe (as a large man). In the *Prophet David* he quotes the following passage from the “*imastunk*” (sages), who are in fact the authors of the *Rasā’il*:

According to the sages [*imastunk*] man is a small world.⁵⁵ . . . All the species that are in the world exist in man: through the senses he is part of the animals, through his vegetative activities to the plants, and through his intellect to the intelligible world by which he reaches the Creator. By virtue of this [condition between the visible and invisible], man is like a storage [*pahang*] and link [*kap*] between all the beings.⁵⁶

C. Man as Soul

Throughout his literature, Yovhannēs adopted the Platonic concept of the soul, mixed with Aristotelian elements, typical of the *Rasā’il*. In an extremely fragmented passage in the *Views*, he tries to explain that the soul is divided into the rational (*banakan*) part situated in the brain, the spirited (*c’asmanakan*) part situated in the liver, and passionate/instinctive (*c’ankakan*) part situated in the intestines.⁵⁷ Virtues and vices follow this tripartite structure. Much later, he produced the same idea in a sermon dedicated to Christmas, but in superior form and language:

. . . the soul has three parts: reason [*ban*], spirit [*c’asum*] and desire [*c’ankut’iwn*] and these are the sources of both virtues and vices. The vice of reason is mindlessness and stupidity, its virtue is wisdom, which is also sanity. The supreme vice of the spirited element is excessive arrogance, and wrongly exercised lack of awe and belligerent confrontation. The virtue of this part is moderation (*č’apaworut’iwn*), that is called virility/courage (*ariut’iwn*) meakness and mellowness. The vices of the instinctive part are indulgence in pleasures, and justice is the totality of the virtues.⁵⁸

The Brethren called the rational soul “personal” and “human.”⁵⁹ In the *Prophet David*, Yovhannēs wrote: “That which is located in the head is called . . . rational. While the spirited part [*srtmtakan*] is called the animal and sensitive [soul].”⁶⁰ In this text and elsewhere, he introduces

direct passages and ideas from the *Rasā'il*, which are not found in the *Views*. According to the *Rasā'il*, the brain is located in a cavity in the frontal part of the skull and the rational soul is divided into five parts.⁶¹ The five powers of the rational soul are: imaginative, discursive, preservative (memory), expressive, active.⁶² Yovhannēs adopted this classification to the last detail but made no direct reference to it in the *Views*. Most probably he always had the *Rasā'il* in his disposition as a reference book and comfortably borrowed ideas occasionally mentioning the “wise men,” “sages,” and “scholars” as his sources. For example, following the *Rasā'il*, in the *Prophet David* he has a long passage on the various cavities (*p'oruack'*) of the brain and the locations of the senses and organs for different functions or the “powers” of the rational soul.⁶³ He also has several other versions of this same subject particularly in the sermon on the Seventeenth Psalm.⁶⁴

D. The Body and the Relationship to the Soul

Yovhannēs adopted the Brethren's approach to the subject of the body, its constitution, functions, chemistry, tissues, illnesses, etc., but with one deliberate omission: the analogy between the parts of the human body and the zodiac. In the Sermon on the Fifty-second Psalm, he reproduces a typical idea of the *Rasā'il* about health being a chemical balance and the proper synchronization of the functions of the body.⁶⁵

The Brethren's views on the relationship between the body and the soul were in turn adopted in the entire literature of Yovhannēs. He defined two levels in their relationship: physical-biological and religious-moral. On the biological level, the principle is *axtak'ut'iwn* or co-ailment, co-reflectivity. Even though the soul and body are distinct (*ansp'ot'*), he said, they are organically linked to each other in such a way that each part reflected the condition of the other.⁶⁶

Without ever providing an answer, Yovhannēs often posed the question about the interaction of the body and the soul as two distinct substances. This is a metaphysical as well as a religious-moral question, and it seems to impose itself here. What is the role of the rational soul if the physical make-up of a certain individual is such that as a consequence of the high proportion of one of the “mixtures,” such as black bile, he acts in a morally undesirable manner? The criteria to judge human action seem to be divided between different considerations. This problem does not surface in the *Rasā'il*, because the Brethren were fatalistic. Yovhannēs tried to turn around the problem by his

analogies to explain the body-soul unity, like sunlight in air, divine image in matter, fire in iron, etc. It seems to me that he had the dictum of “two natures in one” of Armenian Christology in mind. Yovhannēs also used the classic Platonic metaphor of the two-horse chariot, with reason as the charioteer, the philosopher king, etc. But in general, he insisted on explaining spiritual-psychological conditions through physical factors, giving the body a very significant role in affecting human behavior. The soul in turn caused certain conditions in the body, he often observed.⁶⁷

E. Theory of Knowledge

In Armenian culture it was the domination of Aristotle that eased the way to a moderate secularization of the sciences; the process, however, took a long time. In Islamic culture and based on Qur’ānic encouragement of the knowledge of the world, as well as the favorable policies of the state, theology and science developed on separate trajectories.

The Brethren’s comprehensive system of sciences was understandably very attractive to a novice like Yovhannēs. Even though their epistemology was heavily influenced by their mysticism, he seems to have deliberately avoided it. After the *Views*, where the five means of knowledge were presented in some detail, he managed to develop a very simple theory. In line with the Armenian philosophical tradition as of the fifth century, and in all of his later works, he suggested two ways of knowing: senses and reason. While the *Rasā’il* considered the senses the most elementary and the lowest, Yovhannēs regarded them and experimentation—as a means of cognition—as important as reason.⁶⁸ In another work he said that the five senses are like the “gates on city walls.” Everything good and evil passes through these gates.⁶⁹ The analogy of the city (as gates, wall, inhabitants, etc.) is often used in the *Rasā’il* and by Yovhannēs too on many occasions.

F. Theory of Morals

In the comparison between the moral philosophy of the *Rasā’il* and that of Yovhannēs, two factors must be taken into consideration: Platonic morality that was common to both and the requirements of the two religions. For the latter it was Isma’īlī Islam, and Christianity for Yovhannēs. While in the *Rasā’il*, the emanational and mystical system created a cosmic yet closed circuit, Yovhannēs functioned on the basis of a Christian understanding of man’s position in society and towards God. Naturally for him, free will or self-rule (*anjnišxanut’iwn*),

rational conduct, and the emulation of God through Christ were the guidelines.⁷⁰ Self-rule meant the authority of reason over the individual, and rationality was the expression of man's autonomy. In the fatalistic system of the Brethren, even though reason was assigned a central role in human action, self-rule had a restricted place.

In both cases of the *Rasā'il* and the *Views*, the question whether the body and its "loves" and actions are evil remains ambiguous. The concept of sin should shed some light. In his later works, Yovhannēs defined sin as the consequence of acting by the "laws of the body." The Brethren placed the issue in broader contexts. They considered and studied at length the influence of geographic location, climate, and culture on human character and ethical conduct. Yovhannēs did not indulge in these exercises. He elaborated ideas on the relationship between the body and soul, always resorting to the Scriptures and never diverging from a predominantly Christian system of morality. He also suggested an original system of virtues.⁷¹ The subject of attraction, love or *'ishq* is given a very large section in the psychology of the Brethren, but Yovhannēs completely overlooks it in the *Views* and later on.

G. Social-Political Philosophy

The Brethren's social-political philosophy was part of the Ismā'īlī reform project. However, for Yovhannēs the laws of the Christian God were translated into secular power and the latter had absolute authority. The ruler is the second most important lawgiver, leader, father, and healer, and as such he is supposed to be a role model. The supreme spiritual ruler—Imām in the Ismā'īlī system is a totally different concept than just a monarch/king, and again Yovhannēs deliberately avoids it.

H. Cosmology and Astronomy

Basically, the *Rasā'il* reproduces the astronomical sciences of the age with certain modifications to adapt them to their mystical metaphysics. But for a novice like Yovhannēs, who was unfamiliar with Greek and even Armenian sources, these sciences present particular interest and fascination. Being unfamiliar with the terms, in the *Views* he uses the Arabic terms in transliteration. But in his later works, and the two cosmological treatises,⁷² he manages to grasp terms and concepts. In the first treatise in verse, he advises his reader to seek knowledge as a "thirsty man who runs to water," without shunning the sciences of the "other peoples" (*aylaseṛ azgac'*) or the Muslims.⁷³ The treatise where

we find an abundance of astronomical ideas is “On the Mystery of the Resurrection of Lazarus.”⁷⁴

Yovhannēs never lost the spirit in which he wrote the *Views* and managed to let it shine through his entire literature, including his poetry. He never wrote purely philosophical treatises but was always keen on providing argumentations and a wide range of philosophical ideas and mildly scientific information in his sermons. He was a very popular speaker and his works were read in the monastic schools as of the fourteenth century and later on in Siwnik’ and elsewhere on the mainland as well as Cilicia. Through Yovhannēs, the encyclopedic interests and the broad worldview of the Ismā’īlī-Qarmat’ian authors of the *Rasā’il* were assimilated and became elements in the secularization of knowledge and a renaissance of sorts in medieval Armenian culture. Neither his bold initiative nor the identity of his “tajik” philosophers were ever noticed, appreciated, or studied.

Notes

1. Dadoyan, *The Views and Islamic Sources*, 187–220.
2. Ibid., 173–85.
3. For his biography see: Srapean, *Yovhannēs Erznkac’i*, and Pahtasarean, *Yovhannēs Erznkac’i*.
4. T. Palean, *C’učak Hayerēn Jeṛagrac’ Vanuc’ Surb Karapeti ew Surb Daniēli i Kesaria* [List of Armenian Manuscripts at the Monastery of St. Karabet and St. Daniel at Caesarea], (Vienna: Mxit’arists, 1963), 56.
5. Ibid., 2.
6. Dadoyan, *The Views and the Islamic Sources*, 173–85.
7. Ibid., 187–220.
8. *Rasā’il*, vol. I, Epistle 1, 49.
9. The following are some of the more extensive discussions in the *Rasā’il*: vol. I, Ep. 1, 76–77; vol. I, Ep. 2, 78–79; vol. I, Ep. 7, 266–75.
10. *Views*, fol. 103b.
11. Ibid.
12. *Views*, fol. 104a.
13. *Rasā’il*, vol. I, Epistle 1, 76.
14. *Views*, fol. 104a.
15. *Rasā’il*, vol. II, Epistle 10, 396–402.
16. *Views*, fol. 92b.
17. Ibid., fol. 100b.
18. *Rasā’il*, vol. II, Epistle 10, 396–97.
19. *Views*, fol. 92b.
20. *Rasā’il*, vol. II, Epistle 12, 462.
21. *Views*, fol. 100b.
22. Ibid., fols. 100a–100b.
23. *Views*, fol. 100b.
24. *Rasā’il*, vol. II, Epistle 12, 464.

25. Ibid., Epistle 10, 414–15.
26. *Rasā'il*, vol. II, Epistle 12, 464.
27. *Views*, fols. 105a–105b.
28. Ibid., fols. 1006a–106b.
29. *Rasā'il*, vol. II, Epistle 1, 6–7.
30. Ibid.
31. *Views*, fols. 93a–93b.
32. Ibid., fols. 93b–94a
33. Ibid., fol. 96b.
34. *Rasā'il*, vol. II, Epistle 3, 52–61.
35. Ibid., 58.
36. Ibid., 58–59.
37. *Views*, fol. 94b.
38. *Rasā'il*, vol. III, Epistle 4, 237.
39. *Views*, fols. 106a–106b, 96b.
40. Ibid., fol. 106a.
41. Ibid., fols. 101a–101b.
42. *Rasā'il*, vol. III, Epistle 1, 187.
43. Yovhannēs often uses the Arabic terms for the planets. The following are the equivalents: Lusaber = Zuhrah, Erewak = Zuḥal, Hrat = Marriḵh, Lunst'ag = Mushtarī, Lusin = Qamar, Arew = Shams, Paylacu = 'Oṭārid.
44. *Rasā'il*, vol. III, Epistle 1, 187–89.
45. *Views*, fols. 101a–b, 102a–b, respectively.
46. Ibid., fols. 101a–b.
47. Ibid., fols. 102a–b.
48. Dadoyan, *The Views and Islamic Sources*, 187–220.
49. Erznkac'i, *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i* [Concerning the Teachings of the Prophet David], Mat. Ms. # 2173, fols. 104a–104b.
50. Ibid., fol. 112b.
51. Erznkac'i, *I Žam Surb Pataragin* [On the Holy Mass] Mat. Ms. # 2173, fols. 56b–62b, fol. 60a. In Armenian:
' . . . arawel xawar k'an zamenayn, ē angitut'ean xawar, yormē cnan i melk' ew anhawatut'iwn ew anyusut 'iwn ew bolor gorck'n xawari.' The entire passage is in Dadoyan, *Views and Islamic Sources*, 187–89.
52. *Views*, fol. 100a.
53. *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i*, fol. 106a.
54. Erznkac'i, *I JE (17th) Salmosn*, Mat. Ms. #2173, fol. 159b.
55. Ibid., 160b.
56. Erznkac'i, *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i*, fols. 105b.
57. *Views*, fols. 105a–105b.
58. Erznkac'i, *I Toni Cnndean ew Mkrtut'ean K'ristosi* [On the occasion of the Feast of the birth and Baptism of Christ], Mat. Ms. # 2173, fols. 72b–73a.
59. *Rasā'il*, vol. II, Epistle 9, 382–83.
60. Erznkac'i, *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i*, fol. 107b.
61. *Rasā'il*, vol. II, Epistle 10, 415–16.
62. Ibid., See vol. II, Epistles 9 and 10.
63. Erznkac'i, *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i*, fol. 107a.
64. Erznkac'i, *I JE Salmosn*, fol. 162a.
65. Erznkac'i, *I CB Salmosn*, fol. 179b.

66. Erznkac'i, *I Ban Margarēin Dawt'i*, 108a, 109a–109b.
67. Dadoyan, *Views and the Islamic Sources*, 147–49.
68. Erznkac'i, *I Toni Cnndean ew Mkrtut'ean K'ristosi*, fol. 71a.
69. Erznkac'i, *Xrat Hogešah*, Mat. Ms. # 2939, fol. 266a.
70. Erznkac'i, *I H Salmosn*, [On the 70th Psalm], Mat. Ms. # 2173, fol. 187b.
71. Erznkac'i, *I JLA Salmosn* [On the 131th Psalm], Mat. Ms # 2173, fols. 317b–318a.
72. Erznkac'i, *Yalags Erknayin Zarduc'* (Concerning Heavenly Ornaments), in: A. Srapean, *Pank' Čapaw* (Poems), (Erevan: Sovetakan Groġ, 1986), 256; *Yalags Erknayin Šaržmann* (Concerning Heavenly Movements), (Mat. Ms. # 2173 fols. 151a–157a. Published: *Tetrak Hamarot ew Li Imasnaxoh Baniwk'* (Brief Booklet Full of Wise Words), (Nor Naxijewan: Tparan Norin Barjr Srbaznut'ean, 1792).
73. Erznkac'i, *Concerning Heavenly Ornaments*, 256.
74. Erznkac'i, *X orhurd Yarut'ean Łazaru*, Mat. Ms.# 2173 (as of fol. 401a).

Project for the Spiritualization and Control of Urban Society: ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Nāṣir’s Futuwwa Project as Model for the Constitution of the Brotherhood of Erznka

I. Caliph al-Nāṣir’s Futuwwa Project and the Constitution of the Brotherhood of Erznka

An advanced case of medieval cosmopolitanism and urbanism, Erznka seems to have developed more sophisticated social structures and a culture than the other cities of eastern Asia Minor where Armenians lived. In most respects, the city was one of the most luxurious urban centers of the Near East, as told by travelers. The beauty of its nature on the banks of the Euphrates, abundance of entertainment and food gave the city a worldly glamour that was reflected in the arts, crafts, and culture.

The maintenance and improvement of crafts, trade, the exigencies of urban society and visitors needed more knowledge and science. Interest in Arab expertise was not only natural but also necessary. Yovhannēs Erznkac’i could not be an exception, and with an open mind and eagerness to learn he helped himself to the treasures of the *Rasā’il* and Islamic civilization. Most probably other Armenians in Erznka had similar attitudes, but the record is scarce and the existing literature insufficient.

As far as the Armenians of Erznka were concerned, their fascination with Arab sciences and arts did not seem to affect their religious and

national loyalties. In fact, what Yovhannēs learned from the *Rasā'il* he applied in his career as a preacher, teacher, and social figure. His sermons were very popular for their informative style, and his works became textbooks in the monastic schools of Siwnik' on the mainland in the east and Cilicia. At no point, and to this day, his Ismā'īli sources and sympathies were detected, or even suspected.

As mentioned, this chapter establishes a hitherto unnoticed and unstudied connection between the Islamic *futuwwa* reform project of 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir lī-Dīn Allāh (reign: 1180/575H–1225/622H) and a similar initiative by the Armenian Church/state in Erznka in 1280. The comparison between texts and policies establishes that the *Constitution* in two parts written by Yovhannēs in 1280 for the Brotherhoods of Erznka was almost literally borrowed from Caliph al-Nāṣir's *futuwwa* reform project and literature. They were adopted and implemented in Erznka, other cities, as well as in the East European Armenian communities towards the end of the nineteenth century. This is the focus of this chapter.

In general, the subject of urban youth brotherhoods was marginalized in Armenian medieval histories. After the publication of an article by Lewon Xaç'ıkean in 1951, and then the first part of the *Constitution* (in 1962), some interest in the subject began after 1970s.¹ The connection between al-Nāṣir's initiative and that of Yovhannēs was never made, nor the typically Near Eastern and extra-ethnic nature of the urban coalitions ever traced. Only indirect references were made about the existence of Islamic urban coalitions as well in the region.

The direct link between the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* and Armenian reform projects puts the subject of Near Eastern urbanism in new perspective, particularly in the case of the Armenians. As demonstrated, it can be established that similar to many other aspects of the Armenian experience in the region, the urban brotherhoods were not "purely" Armenian. Since for centuries the cities of Asia Minor were mostly under Muslim control, inevitably, even when they were the majority of the inhabitants, the Armenians were integral elements of urban cosmopolitan contexts. As we follow the history of the various Near Eastern cities after the tenth century, we realize that the youth coalitions or confraternities were not only extra-ethnic but also extra-religious social-economic formations. In fact, the initiative of the Armenian Church to adopt and apply an Islamic reform program in Erznka reveals common circumstances for the population of the cities of the region. Consequently, just as the Arabic texts are essential for the

understanding of Armenian urban brotherhoods, the brotherhood texts and poems by Yovhannēs and his younger compatriot and “brother” (in the coalition) Kostandin Erznkac’i are part of the primary sources for the subjects of Nāṣirī futuwwa, Akhism, and Near Eastern urbanism in general. More importantly, and as discussed in this chapter, the folklore and arts of urban youth laid the grounds for the development of the culture of gradually developing urban middle classes of all ethnic backgrounds in Near Eastern cities.

As of the ninth century, the futuwwa and the brotherhoods of manuks were essential parts of the medieval Near Eastern urban landscape. During the first quarter of the thirteenth century, the reformed or courtly futuwwa of Caliph al-Nāṣir and its literature penetrated the cities of Rūm Seljuk of which Erznka was a part. The Nāṣirī project was essentially a spiritualization of the futuwwa bond and a career based on religious laws, in this case Islam. Similar to other cities, Erznka also had its manuks (young men), who were traditionally, and as everywhere, anarchistic and militant youth. Using the Nāṣirī model, the initiative of the Church/state was to control them by spiritualizing them, as it were, by replacing Islam by Christianity. In sum, when in 1280 Yovhannēs was asked to write a constitution, he simply Armenianized-Christianized al-Nāṣir’s reform project.² The comparison of texts and policies below will show this direct case of adoption.

The *Constitution* had no precedents or parallels in Armenian literature and social history, but almost immediately it became part of the control-reform programs of Armenian urban communities everywhere. In view of the near-absence of references to brotherhoods in medieval Armenian literature and histories to that time, and the astonishing similarities to the Nāṣirī futuwwa model, the latter becomes the most important framework for study and analysis. In turn, as mentioned, the *Constitution* has its great significance for the study of medieval Near Eastern urban coalitions in general. It reveals so far undetected dimensions in the reform project of Caliph al-Nāṣir, and novel aspects of Christian-Muslim interactions in and through urban-cosmopolitan contexts. Furthermore, its adoption towards the end of the nineteenth century and beyond is an even more intriguing aspect of Islamic-Armenian interactions.

II. The *Fatā*, *Manuk*, *Jawanmard*, *Aqqi/Akbi*, and Urban Motifs of Manliness

“Ideology is not a reflection of life but a scheme for influencing it,” says G. Duby.³ This is true to a certain extent, but as projects to influence

life, ideologies also reflect certain contexts and motives. However, the statement throws some light on Caliph al-Nāṣir's *futuwwa* ideology to reform urban youth and its Armenianization few decades later. These were elaborate and comprehensive systems to remold life in cities and urban society. They also reflected the culture and circumstances of urban youth, which ran counter to the interests and norms of the institutions. Earlier on in Baghdad and the cities of al-Shām and Egypt, the urban youth coalitions were already militarized and were involved in local politics whenever they had a chance. These youth were already social types and acted as distinct urban classes similar to the other classes. The foundational concept in all these coalitions was "manliness" in a changing and unsettling world. In early medieval Near Eastern society, the ideal of manliness implied a young, defiant, somehow extra-establishment, robust fighter and survivor.⁴ He was the protagonist in folk tales, poetry, and legends like the cycle of the Armenian epic of *Sasnaŋ Crer*, the Byzantine *Digenis Akritis*, the Arabic *Sayyid Baṭṭāl* and other tales.

Technically, the Arabic *fatā* (*fityān* is the plural, *futuwwa* is the abstract noun), *ḥadith*, *shabb*, the Armenian *manuk*, *ktrič* (brave young man), or *eritasard* (young man), the Persian *jawanmard* or *juvanmard*, the Turkish *yigit*, *aqqī*, or the Arabic *akhī* (meaning 'my brother'), all implied youth, courage, audacity, honor, generosity, toughness, and more importantly, a secular ideal of manliness. It is important to keep in mind that the ethics of manliness was a distinct category, only very remotely connected to Christianity and/or Islam. It gradually emerged from pre-Christian and pre-Islamic periods and evolved through Near Eastern circumstances. The development of cities and the increasing numbers of jobless youth drew peculiar paths of evolution. As images of manliness in urban environments conditioned and reflected stages in the evolution of urban culture and society, the reformed ideals imposed by the ruling institutions created religious-normative criteria that suggested and attempted to impose different ideologies. These were instances of intense social conflict during the evolution of cities and it was during the fourteenth century that they took less acute patterns.

In pre-Islamic culture, the term *fatā* meant young, rigorous man, valiant in warfare, noble and chivalrous. Cahen observes that the semi-legendary model for it in ancient Arabian society was Ḥātim al-Tāyy.⁵ Massignon thinks that "when the heroes of early Islamic wars came to be described as *fatās*—and 'Alī in particular by the Prophet—the

concept entered the culture as a description of personal excellence.” The abstract noun *futuwwa* appeared in the “ascetic and mystical manuscripts’ of the tenth century.” In these contexts however, it had little to do with urban *futuwwa*, which were semi-organized paramilitary coalitions in most cities.⁶ In general, names varied depending on location and context, these youth were identified as *aḥdāth*, *fityān*, *ʿayyarūn*, *awbāsh*, *runūd*, etc.

A. The Aḥdāth and Fityān in the Near Eastern Cities

In al-Shām, members of urban youth coalitions were called *aḥdāth*, the plural of *ḥadath* or adolescent-juvenile. This is the exact synonym of Armenian *tlayahasak manuk*, a phrase often used by Yovhannēs Erznkac’i. Similar to *fatā* and *ḥadath*, *manuk* became a technical term to refer to the members of the urban youth coalitions. The Syrian *aḥdāth*, described as the rabble or mob, or as *ahl* or native people or inhabitants, are first mentioned by Ibn al-ʿAdīm in his narrative of the siege of Aleppo by Nikephoros Phokas in 962.⁷

These mainly jobless young men gathered in cities and were involved in local feuds for the control of resources and survival. At times of power vacuum, and when called upon by rival local warlords, they also fought for the protection of their cities and played a role analogous to that of the *shurṭah* (police). By the latter part of the tenth century they constituted a power to be reckoned with. During the first half of the twelfth century, for example, the *aḥdāth* of Damascus virtually controlled the city and fought the Fāṭimids when the latter invaded al-Shām.⁸

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as mentioned earlier, there were also Armenian *aḥdāth*-type militant groups and mercenaries of heterodox backgrounds in north Syria from Antioch to Aleppo, in the cities along the Euphrates and the valley of the Orontes. Turkish Yaghī Siyān, governor of Antioch and Ruḍwān of Aleppo, for example, recruited them in their service.⁹ Around 1074, the governor of Antioch, Vasak Pahlawuni, a son of Grigor Magistros, was said to have been assassinated by *hadads*, or *ḥadāths* (singular of *aḥdāth*), as referred to previously in Volume Two. It is not difficult to see these factions opposed to the Byzantine appointed governor, whose father persecuted thousands of heterodox and militant Tʾondrakians only two decades earlier, and drove them into north Syria. They were anarchistic groups and Philaretus liquidated seven hundred of them, supposedly in revenge, as he claimed and after he was said to have been invited by the Antiochans (in 1080).

H. Kennedy has an interesting description of the beginnings and nature of the futuwwa or the urban “proletariat” as he calls them. During the siege of Baghdad by Ṭāhir Ibn al-Ḥusayn in 812/196H, Caliph al-Amin (809/193H–813/198H) armed the people of the city:

Contemptuously referred to as *‘ayyarūn* (vagabonds), they were clearly the urban proletariat, not large property-owners nor the more substantial merchants but rather people who sold trifles on the streets. They have left their own record in some remarkable poems in which they glory in the fact that they do not come from any noble family, that their “armor” was made of wool and their helmets of palm leaves, and they lament the barbarity of their attackers and the destruction of the city. We would probably see them as people from the country, who had flocked to Baghdad in their previous two generations, and had been unable to establish themselves as merchants or property-owners; many of them are described as sleeping in the mosques and baths. The movement was a genuinely popular uprising and was perhaps the nearest early Islamic history saw to an attempt at social revolution.¹⁰

In fact there were similar coalitions in non-Arab locations too, such as Khurasān, Nishapūr, Ṭūs, Balkh, Bukhāra, and Samarqand.¹¹ In addition to simply the jobless, men of disclaimed occupations (in the Islamic tradition then) too, says Cahen, such as wage workers, minorities, and foreigners attempted to find a place in society by creating careers for themselves as a class, and so enrolled in these coalitions.¹² He believes that these changes indeed marked the beginnings of social-class consciousness in urban society and culture.¹³

Sometimes, heterodox groups too joined the youth organizations and controlled them. This was the case of the Armenian Gorguians of the thirteenth century who ended up in Erznka, and the Sunni Nubuwiyyah of Syria, whom Arab traveler from Spain, Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217) met in Syria around 1184.¹⁴ Though often incidental, the link between sect and futuwwa—both being marginal and dissident social factions—is a very intriguing and understudied theme.

B. The Armenian Manuks and Manktawags

In Armenian literature, terms like *manuk* and *manktawag* (or senior manuk, chief of manuks) appeared after the middle of the eleventh century. But earlier on, at the end of the ninth century, *elbayranoc*’s or houses of brothers (*elbayr* means brother) were opened in Armenian cities.¹⁵ No links however can be established between these institutions

and the urban manuks of later periods, as some tend to see. It must not be forgotten that the cities in Armenia and the wider region developed during and after the tenth century. Even then, they were more like fortress-towns. Consequently, as primarily urban organizations, the urban manuks could only accompany and follow urbanization and not precede it. Generally, medieval Armenian historians seem to have taken the types called *ktrič* and *manuk* for granted and occasionally referred to them as sporadic phenomena. The dissident and chaotic nature of youth brotherhoods may have been a factor in this deliberate marginalization.¹⁶

The word *ktrič* is the equivalent of the Arabic *fatā*. It is both an adjective and a noun, and replaced the word *manuk* as a technical term after the thirteenth century. However, it was used on several occasions, during the 1060s for example, by Amīr Ktrič Arisighi, the Ghuzz-Turkmen chieftain of the Nāwīqīs in Asia Minor. As mentioned, the term appeared a century later in late Fāṭimid history in Y. Sufean's account (only) of the final battle for the royal palace of the last Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ādid in 1171. The guards who perished in the fire were said to be "armed Armenian *ktričs*."¹⁷ It is possible that these *ktričs* were fragments of the mostly Armenian juyushiyah forces in the Fāṭimid Army established by Muslim-Armenian vizier Badr al-Jamālī almost a century earlier (as discussed in Volume Two).

In Armenian society and literature, *manuk* was a term used during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. *Elbayr* or brother, *hasarakac' elbayr* and *ašxarhakan elbayr* (secular brother) were terms used during the thirteenth century and later. During the sixteenth century, the term *ktričalber* (*ktrič-alber* or brave brother) appeared in the vernacular and some dialects.

Some Armenian historians suggest that the Armenian urban brotherhoods were simply the continuation of pagan and early medieval Armenian paramilitary sports organizations. At'oyan, the initiator of this hypothesis, observes that in the cities of pagan Armenia and Iran there were training centers for boys and that girls too took part in sports and wrestling activities.¹⁸ The boys were divided into age groups: adolescents (*dlayahasak*) fourteen to sixteen years old; juniors (*patani*) seventeen to eighteen years old; young men (*eritasard*) nineteen to twenty five years old; seniors (*mecahasak*) twenty five years and over. According to At'oyan, the "Armenian-national" ideal of manliness, as he puts it, was central to this tradition and the urban youth organizations of later periods simply inherited the legacy. There is no literature to

establish a connection between the medieval sports organizations and the urban manuks.

There can be no social change in a vacuum, and urban youth could not precede the urban centers which produced and hosted them. Sports do not necessarily mark urban culture, in fact they were more common in pagan and rural contexts. Furthermore, in medieval cultures the ideal of physical prowess and courage for a man was as universal as physical beauty and meekness for a woman. At'oyan's account of the beginnings of Armenian youth coalitions in the pagan institution of sports overlooks the patterns and specificities of the development of urbanism in Near Eastern cities that Islam inherited. The hypothesis also misses the social-economic roots and role of futuwwa and manuk coalitions.

Another channel to trace the beginnings of Armenian urban youth coalitions is the appearance of the term *manktawag* in literature. An inscription of the year 1060 on the south wall of the Church of Goš (Gošavank') in Armenia is the earliest example. The word appeared among the donors; hence, the existence of manuks, as the argument goes.¹⁹ Many historians also seem to overlook the fact that the institution of the *manktawag* was pagan and indigenous to the Near East. In the *Additional Canons*, the second part of the *Constitution*, Yovhannēs explicitly states the pagan roots of the tradition.²⁰

This passage however, and similar references in the *Constitution* of Yovhannēs Erzknac'i, does not assist us in locating the beginnings of the Armenian urban brotherhoods of manuks, as we know them. They only show that, as in the other societies, the ancient institution of *manktawags* and manuks was adopted in the urban coalitions, as it was in the case of the Islamic futuwwa and some Near Eastern esoteric Islamic sects. In the futuwwa organizations too, and from the beginning, there were elders or *kabīrs* who adopted junior members or the *ṣaghīrs*. The bond was sometimes described as father-son (*abb-ibn*), or in Armenian, as "spiritual father-adopted son" (*hogewor hayr-hogezawak*) relationship. In many versions this pattern was also common to Kurdish Bektāshīs, Ahl-ī-Ḥaqq, and other sub-Shī'ī sects. The junior was called a *murīd* (a disciple-novice asking for initiation) and the elder was his *wakīl* (his spiritual deputy-representative-tutor).

The first direct mention of militant Armenian manuks in north Syria and generally in Upper Mesopotamia is found in the *Chronicle* of Matthew. According to his story, during the Lent of the year 1080 (or earlier) a group of eighty manuks arrived in Antioch led by their *manktawag*.

Armed with batons and knives, they were escorting a caravan that was carrying the dried fish (*tarekh*) of Lake Van in the northeast. In the evening, as these youth were banqueting, drinking, and dancing in the market place, some natives of the city attacked them. Judging from the number of casualties the skirmish caused, their retaliation was heavy, but peace was eventually made and the manuks left for home after they persuaded their enemies to “swear by the Cross and the Bible” never to transgress again.²¹ The story of Gorg Širakac’i (as discussed in Volume Two) is also told in this context to show the mutual hatred between Greeks and Armenians in this Syrian city.

As of the tenth century, Armenian dissident and often militant factions of heterodox backgrounds spread throughout Upper Mesopotamia, Syria, and further south. As discussed in Volume Two, the Armenian Period in Fāṭimid Egypt (1074–1171) was simply the culmination of large scale Armenian involvement in Islamic politics. In medieval Arab histories and chronicles of the Crusaders, there are many references to Armenian mercenaries and aḥdāth of heterodox backgrounds. Some of these were known as Muslim-Armenian mercenaries, others were simply called Paulician Armenians (in Crusader sources) or Armenian Sun Worshipers (*shamsiyah Arman*, not related to the other *Shamsiyas*, another faction known in Syria at the time). The evidence shows that by their career and culture, these groups were part of the urban fityān of the ‘Abbāsīd world. The ktričs to which Sufean refers may be linked (with no proof however) to Armenian youth acting as mercenaries for the Fāṭimid court at the time. Yovhannēs and his compatriot Kostandin, Kirakos Ganjakec’i and later on Matt’ēos Jūlayec’i, and Grigor Tat’ewac’i described social conditions in Armenian cities similar to others in the region. It is not surprising to find general patterns of urban development in all areas, especially in a cosmopolitan city like Erzna.

Another comment about Armenian scholarship concerning the brotherhoods is in order at this point. The identification of the Armenian manuks with professional or artisanal associations has indeed drastically eclipsed the subject. While urban youth existed as of the ninth century, the artisanal coalitions appeared after the thirteenth century, during the Mongol period. These groups maintained a good deal of the structural and organizational patterns of the earlier futuwwa and Akhism, but they were different phenomena. There exists a rare text of the eighteenth century from Erzurum about the relations between Armenian artisans and the local Turkish *futuvel* (or futuwwa).

Additionally, artisanal coalitions needed more advanced levels of urban and economic development to emerge.

Matt'ēos Ĵuḷayec'i (d. 1420s) describes the following classes in urban society: vagrant men with no specific employment, home, or city; those who lived casually; thieves and brigands; unskilled laborers (*mšak*); skilled artisans (*arwestavork'*); messengers like *dallaks* and private envoys; men of judicial careers; scholars and men of learning; monastics who lived by worship; people of authority in both secular and religious institutions. No mention is made of merchants and youth brotherhoods, even though they seem to fit into the first three categories.²² Grigor Tat'ewac'i described four categories of what he calls "secular brotherhoods." They were distinguished by language, location, culture, and occupation.²³ T'ovma Mecop'ec'i (fifteenth century) establishes their active role during the Mongol invasions. He relates that a group of manuks, led by their manktawag Martiros, participated in the defense of the city of Koḷb (west of modern Erevan on the border of the Republic of Armenia).²⁴ In Erzurum, the name of a manktawag appears in the colophon of a manuscript of the year 1283.²⁵

III. Caliph al-Nāṣir's Futuwwa Reform: Ideology, Strategy, and Diffusion in Asia Minor

After the weakening of 'Abbāsīd control and the growth of cities, the urban youth organizations started to become part of the social-cultural evolution and presented serious challenges to authority. Caliph al-Nāṣir's initiative to reform and control them had wider political and ideological objectives. F. Taeschner, Jawād, and many Arab historians concentrated on the ideological aspect. Massignon, Cahen, Mason, and others saw it as part of the caliph's strategy to recover some of the lost prestige and influence of the caliphate.²⁶ Ibn Jubayr, the Arab scholar-traveler from Spain, reported seeing the caliph during his visit to Baghdad in 1225/580H. He described him as a lean bearded man of average height, with very fair skin and in Turkish attire. He was the son of Zumurrud, a Turkish lady, who was a Šūfī sympathizer and supporter. Apart from one of his wives and his son 'Alī, Zumurrud was one of the few people al-Nāṣir trusted.²⁷

Born in 1158/553H and proclaimed caliph at age twenty-two, al-Nāṣir remained in power for forty-five years (1180/575H–1225/622H). By that time, the 'Abbāsīds had lost control over Egypt and Syria. The conquests of Šalāḥ ed-Dīn al-Ayyūbī against the Crusaders overshadowed the spiritual status of the caliphate. Effectively controlling

only as far as al-Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ and Ḥillah, and apart from the *bay'ah* (public consent), the caliph practically ruled over a small part of the empire.²⁸

Amidst perpetual clashes between the various parties (*ahzāb*) of the *'ayyārūn*, al-Nāṣir sought ways of restoring the centrality and supremacy of the caliphate. He did indeed recover some of his caliphal role through personal omnipresence, undercover journeys in the streets of Baghdad, and a large network of spies. Al-Nāṣir's most significant strategy was his politics of interplay of alliances with the controversial and heterodox elements in his domain of influence.

A complex yet fascinating character, al-Nāṣir left a self-portrait: it was a low relief made in 1221/618H on the Ṭalisman Gate in Baghdad. He was depicted in a regal position, sitting between two dragons: Jalāl ed-Dīn Ḥasan (d. 1221), the formidable chief of the Ismā'īlī Assassins of Alamūt, and Khwarizmshāh 'Alā' ed-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 1220), another powerful figure.²⁹ Jalāl ed-Dīn, whose Assassins had previously liquidated two 'Abbāsid caliphs, made a most unexpected political move by publicly denouncing his Ismā'īlī faith and anathematizing Alamūt, the stronghold of the Nizārī Ismā'īlis. He even declared his conversion to Sunnī Islam in 1211/608H.³⁰ On his part, al-Nāṣir wanted to improve his popularity among both the Shī'ī and Sunnī Muslims. He appointed Shī'īs in high posts and built the Ghaybat al-Mahdī shrine in Sāmarrā'. He also made a very generous contribution for the renovation of the holy city of Mecca and the Ka'bah.³¹ The strangest of al-Nāṣir's alliances was with the people of the *Balad al-Baṭā'iḥa*, an independent enclave. This was a fifty-mile wide and two-hundred-mile long territory, which extended from the south of Kūfah to al-Baṣrah. For a while he employed these people as hired killers and then dismantled their stronghold.³²

A. Al-Nāṣir's Decree

As mentioned earlier, Caliph al-Nāṣir's involvement in the reform of futuwwa and its propaganda in Syria and Asia Minor were a part of his political maneuvering to regain some of the prestige of the caliphate. In 1182/578H (or 1188–9/583H), he “made official a dissident branch of a trade guild which had existed in Baghdad since the mid-tenth century and called it *Niqābat al-Futuwwa*” (syndicate of the futuwwa).³³ It is believed that during the same year al-Nāṣir was himself initiated to the futuwwa and invested with the *libās* (official costume) by the head of this futuwwa, al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Jabbār Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Baghdādī. We find the following in al-Dhahabī's *Ta'rikh al-Islām*:

‘Abd al-Jabbār Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Ṣālih’ al-Baghdādī, *shaykh* of the futuwwa and its *ra’īs*, the pearl of the throne . . . [with] no equal in *muruwwah* [valiance] and *aṣābiyah* [loyalty-integrity] . . . withdrew [from the world] for the adoration of God. . . . The Imām al-Nāṣir summoned him, was affiliated with him and received the *libās* from him. During the same year ‘Abd al-Jabbār went to pilgrimage, died in the holy place and was buried in the month of Dhūl’-Hijja.³⁴

According to al-Qādisī (a contemporary of al-Nāṣir, continuator of *al-Muntaẓam* of Ibn al-Jawzī), al-Nāṣir’s reform project for the futuwwa in Baghdad was launched after 1200/597H.³⁵ The year 1204/601H saw violent clashes between various factions of the *‘ayyārūn* in Baghdad. Conflicts between these groups accelerated and the situation in the capital deteriorated. Following an incident within the caliph’s own futuwwa or *bayt*, between his favorite slave Najāḥ and companions of vizier Nāṣir ed-Dīn al-‘Alawī, the caliph took drastic steps. He summoned the “heads of the parties of the *fiṭyān*” (*ru’ūs al-aḥzāb*) and vizier Ibn Mahdī read a decree (*manshūr*) written by Mu’ayyid ed-Dīn, the secretary of the palace (*kātib diwān al-inshā’*) on September 4, 1207/Ṣafar 9, 604H. The heads of these factions were urged to sign the document. The following is a verbal summary of al-Nāṣir’s decree:

The Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib is the origin (*aṣl*) of the futuwwa, its source (*manba’*) and the locus/mine (*manjam*) of its noble virtues. To him and no other are the *fiṭyān* affiliated. It is on the perfection of his futuwwa that the definitions of its laws (*ḥudūd al-shar’*) are founded, because it is the Prophet ‘Alī who is taken as the paradigm (*mithāl*) of the purity and the impeccability of his personal conduct in the *Ummah* [Islamic nation]. It is in ‘Alī’s futuwwa that the laws of Islam find their highest expression and embodiment. To suggest a direct link and to present the caliph as the successor of ‘Alī as the ideal *fatā* (described in these terms by the Prophet Muḥammad himself), analogies are drawn between ‘Alī and al-Nāṣir.

[A legal section follows.] He who kills a friend . . . spills blood or commits any act forbidden by the Law, will be located, prosecuted and expelled from the circle of the futuwwa [*dā’irat al-futuwwa*]. He will find his punishment in after life as well. Furthermore, those who provide refuge to the criminals will be treated similarly. Whenever a *fatā* kills a *fatā* of his own party [*ḥizb*], his futuwwa will be annulled. If a *fatā* kills a policeman in al-Nāṣir’s land, he and the chief of his party will lose their futuwwa and be punished. Let everyone be made aware of this decree and be confined to its terms.³⁶

Al-Nāṣir's decree practically canceled all the other urban youth organizations and legalized only his futuwwa, for which he proclaimed himself the *qiblah* or the central authority and reference. The document also raised both the person of the caliph and the caliphate to the status of the ultimate reference for these powerful urban youth coalitions. The caliphate also reconfirmed its position as the only institution in charge of maintaining the Islamic Law or the Sharī'ah. Since the futuwwa included men of all layers of society, it became a microcosmic Muslim community within the macrocosmic *Ummah*, the unity of which lay in him. Al-Nāṣir encouraged everyone to join (*iltihāq*) the futuwwa and go through the initiation rites. These included the drinking of the ceremonial salt water, the wearing of trousers (*sarawīl al-futuwwa*), the *shadd* or fastening of the belt, reading the oath and other texts. He also highly valued physical fitness and encouraged sports, in particular crossbow shooting and breeding of pigeons, for which he was the *qiblah* too. "In effect," says Mason, "he was attempting an '*aṣabiyah* [tight group feeling] and coherent polity through the *futuwwa* . . . analogous to the '*aṣabiyah* and coherence provided by Ibn Hubayra through the Ḥanbalite School."³⁷

In 1207/604H al-Nāṣir also received his *ijāzah* (license) as transmitter of *Ḥadīth* (Islamic tradition) from the doctors of the four schools. In 1210/607H, "he began to speak *ex cathedra* as it were" to the representatives of the four schools plus the Ṣūfīs in Damascus "on conditions of sound authority." Thus, the Nāṣirī futuwwa became an instrument for 'Abbāsid propaganda in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Iran. The caliphal emissaries took the *libās al-futuwwa* or their costume and the literature to various locations. After al-Nāṣir, his son al-Zāhir, showed no interest in the futuwwa, but his prematurely deceased son 'Alī was a supporter and leader. 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mustanṣir (1226/623H–1242/640H) attempted to resume his grandfather's policy of alliances with different groups. Similar to the Twelver Shī'īs, he founded the Mustanṣiriyah School or *madrasah* and activated relations with regional powers. The Mongol invasions put an end to his career.³⁸

IV. The Nāṣirī Futuwwa and Akhism in Seljuk Asia Minor

The immediate context of thirteenth-century Armenian brotherhoods is early *Akhism* in Asia Minor. F. Taeschner defines it as the "specific form assumed by futuwwa organizations in late and post-Seljukid" Asia Minor.³⁹ Prior to the Nāṣirī courtly futuwwa or *akhilik* (literally brotherhood), Ṣūfīs in the Iranian world were also referred to as *akhīs*

or brothers. The Šūfī saint Shaykh Akhī Faraj al-Zanjānī was said to have led a mystical order in the north west of Iran. The Persian poet Nizāmī (d. 1141/636H), a spiritual disciple of al-Zanjānī,⁴⁰ and Akhī Turk of the thirteenth century from Urmia, are examples. The akhīs in northwestern Iran and Urmia, as well as local cults there, like that of Abū Muslims among the akhīs in Asia Minor, indicate to their Iranian origins.⁴¹ The veneration of ‘Alī in akhī organizations and their adherence to the Salmānian traditions (particularly by the artisanal brotherhoods later on), provide some ground for the above opinion. Salmān al-Fārisī, as his name indicates, was a Persian and a companion to the Prophet. He is said to have translated parts of the Qur’ān in Persian and is particularly venerated by Shī‘ī Muslims and their sects.

The urban and non-professional nature of the early akhilik and its origination in northwest Iran and further seem to be established facts. With respect to professional brotherhoods in Asia Minor, the role and culture of Greek and Armenian craftsmen is to be taken into consideration as an important factor in later developments of artisanal coalitions. These highly skilled artisans were in the region from pagan times. From the beginning, they had elementary guild norms and usually had their own quarters in the markets. Otherwise, artisanal brotherhoods were post-Mongol developments. But based on the legend of Akhī Evran (thirteenth century), the protector of tanners and gardeners, G. Vajda suggests the existence of a guild-oriented akhī fraternity during the Seljuk period.⁴² This view is rightly challenged by others like Cahen, who insist on later periods and more developed urbanization for the appearance of guild organizations.⁴³

Al-Nāṣir’s futuwwa reached Asia Minor through Shaykh Majd ed-Dīn Ishāq, the envoy of Rūm Seljuk Sultan ‘Izz ed-Dīn Kay Kāwūs I (1210/607H—1219/616H) to Caliph al-Nāṣir in Baghdad. The Shaykh was then authorized by the caliph to “confer the libās” to the Sultan, but more importantly, he was given as a “source book of futuwwa procedure and structure, a copy of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* [Book of Futuwwa], written in 1211/608H by Ibn al-Mi‘mār, a Ḥanbali traditionalist and jurisconsult of Baghdad (d. 1248/646H).” Most of the comparative analysis in this section is based on this text. During this time, al-Qāḍī Burhān ed-Dīn, a contemporary of Kay Kāwūs I served as the caliph’s emissary to Armenia. Thus, courtly futuwwa, called akhilik penetrated Anatolia through the initiation of Kay Kāwūs I, when he received the libās of al-Nāṣir’s futuwwa in 1214/611H.⁴⁴ Since the futuwwa reflected the ideals of the Islamic *Ummah* and manliness in that context, the initiative also served

the need of the Seljuks for legitimacy.⁴⁵ Al-Nāṣir's futuwwa literature too became available in Rūm Seljuk as well as Erznka.

Kay Kāwūs I was faithful to the futuwwa to the end. In 1221/618H, during the reign of his successor 'Alā' ed-Dīn Kay Kubād I (1219/616H–1236/634H), the great Shaykh Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (al-Nāṣir's theological advisor) came to Konya as his personal representative and propagandist. He also performed futuwwa initiation ceremonies. The mystical orientation of al-Suhrawardī remolded futuwwa ideology and rites in Ṣūfī motifs. As of his involvement, Ṣūfism and futuwwa ideals converged and generated new and predominantly religious-ascetic models.

The recruitment of Rūm Seljuk rulers and the personal appeal of envoys like al-Suhrawardī, contributed to the diffusion of the Nāṣirī futuwwa in the region. More organized akhī coalitions appeared after the middle of the thirteenth century in Konya, Angora, Eskişehir, Kirshehir, Kharput, Erznka, and other locations. However, as Taeschner points out, the "impetus from courtly futuwwa does not seem to be solely responsible for the development of Akhilik" in these locations.⁴⁶

In addition to the works of Ibn al-Mi'mār and al-Suhrawardī, a didactic book by al-Khartabirtī entitled *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāyā* (Most Precious Commandments) was introduced into the cities of eastern Asia Minor. This book was dedicated to the memory of Caliph al-Nāṣir's favorite son 'Alī (d. 1215/612). Al-Khartabirtī was a member of 'Alī's futuwwa group and as he says in the introduction, the ideas expounded in the book were those of his master.⁴⁷ After the first quarter of the thirteenth century, al-Nāṣir's futuwwa texts were available in all the locations where the Seljuks were. Naturally, Armenians too in these locations had access to this literature. These futuwwa texts became the source for numerous treatises or *futuvetnames* in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, as well as Armenian, as I am trying to establish. The Constitution for the Brotherhood of Erznka by Yovhannēs is the proof. The works of later authors, such as Aḥmad Ardabilī and others, were available around 1290/689 in northeastern Anatolia.⁴⁸

After the waning of Seljukid power, there was a rapprochement between the lesser Turkmen amīrs and the akhīs. By the middle of the thirteenth century, when the Seljuks had lost their influence, the akhī organizations even managed to form petty principalities. During Mongol expansion in Anatolia, in some areas like Konya and Erznka, the akhīs led civic resistance. In the region of modern Ankara, the name of the akhī leader appeared in semi-official inscriptions.⁴⁹

Throughout, violence, refusal of the established order, and hatred for police authority remained characteristic of urban youth coalitions. There were anarchistic organizations everywhere with a culture and an ethic of their own. Idealistic futuwwa literature only indirectly implied such practices on the ground. It offered bouquets of virtues, also shown in illustrations of tree-type compositions with names of various virtues as the branches and leaves. The objective was the education of youth and the cultivation of higher spiritual virtues. In the reformed futuwwa texts, sublime ethical and religious ideals always dominated the discussions. "At first sight," says Mason, "one wondered whether it is one and the same organization that is being considered."⁵⁰ Al-Suhrawardi even had a project to merge the Caliphate, Šūfism, and the futuwwa in a hierarchical pattern: the Caliphate was at the highest level, next was Šūfism, then the futuwwa, as a subordinate part of Šūfism. This vision was in perfect harmony with al-Nāṣir's conception of himself, as the qiblah or the supreme authority at the top of a hierarchy.⁵¹

It is difficult to identify all the futuwwa texts and their date of writing/copying that may have circulated in Erznka. I discovered one such manuscript, which establishes a direct link between al-Nāṣir's propaganda literature and the Brotherhoods of Erznka. With the exception of the introductory section, the text is in Persian (in Aya Sofia Ms. #2049, fols. 241–44). The author is Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūṣī, a son of Naṣir ed-Dīn al-Ṭūṣī, the famous scholar and scientist of the twelfth century. In his introduction he says that the text was written for the "*samā'* [audience] of the *fiṭyān* of Erzinjān." He then discusses futuwwa virtues, punctuating them by verses, as it was the tradition in this literature. Yovhannēs in turn wrote many poems dedicated to the virtues of the brothers in the context of his prose.

The Nāṣirī futuwwa texts were mainly collections of ethical-religious advice to the *fiṭyān*. There are *bāṭinī* (esoteric-mystical) influences on the style, language, and use of symbols and letters.⁵² As mentioned, sometimes futuwwa virtues were illustrated as a tree, known as "The Tree of Victory" (*Shajarat al-Fawz*). There is one such illustration in al-Khartabirtī's *Tuhfat al-Waṣāya*.⁵³

V. The Nāṣirī Model and the Constitution for the Brotherhood of Erznka

On the title page of the *Constitution*, Yovhannēs says that it was written at the request of "old priest Grigor Sanahnec'i to reform and guide the urban youth of the city." Literally adopting the basic terms from

al-Nāṣir's decree, *ḥudūd wa shar'*, or definitions and canons, he called his text *Sahman ew Kanonk'*.⁵⁴ The full title is: "Definitions and Canons [Shaman ew Kanonk'] for the Coalition/Union of the Brothers United by Divine Love in the Brotherhood of the Metropolis Called Eznka in 1280" [*Sahman ew Kanonk' Miabanut'ean Elbarc', ork' Astwacayin Sirovn Miabanec'an Yetbayrut'iwn Mimianc'i Mayrak'atak's, or Koč'i Eznkay, i T'wis 1280*]. The text is known as the Constitution.

After the initiation of the Seljuk leaders in his region and the availability of al-Nāṣir's futuwwa texts in Rūm Seljuk, Yovhannēs could easily acquire copies of them, and once again, without mentioning his sources, he directly used the courtly futuwwa texts as sources for his *Constitution*. He simply adopted al-Nāṣir's strategy of controlling urban youth through their spiritualization. In the introduction of the *Constitution* he specifically stated that the objective was to "reform" the existing coalitions by replacing their secular-urban ethics by religious-ascetic ethics. Ibn al-Mi'mār, the spokesman of the Nāṣirī project and the author of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* (handbook of the futuwwa) described the futuwwa as "a virtue of the virtues of religion" (*khiṣlah min khiṣāl al-dīn*). Being a true *fatā*, Ibn al-Mi'mār said, was the equivalent of being a good Muslim.⁵⁵ In turn, Yovhannēs made it clear that being a "true manuk" was the equivalent of being a true Christian and obeying divine commandments.⁵⁶

In the manner of al-Nāṣir, by legalizing a single organization with an official Constitution, the Church-state of Erzinka was depriving the other coalitions of their legality. Using religious ethics as basis, the Union of the Brothers (*elbarc' miut'iwn*) would be brought into its sphere. After the Nāṣirī model, the reformed brotherhood was structured as a para-religious institution, controlled and defined by the spirituality of the Church and its exigencies. These objectives became more explicit in the later versions of constitutions—all based on the Constitution of Erzinka—for the brotherhoods of the East European Armenian communities. Since these communities were organized around the Church, there was a constant effort, though not always successful, to make the members the auxiliaries of the Church.

Similar to al-Nāṣir and his associates in the futuwwa, priest Grigor Sanahneč'i and Yovhannēs were the spiritual leaders of the new organization as elder brothers or *awag elbayrs*. In the two texts of the *Constitution* and his other works, Yovhannēs always addressed his audience as his "beloved brothers" and posed as their "spiritual father," whose role was to guide the junior members.⁵⁷ About the new brotherhood,

Yovhannēs wrote that it was “legalized by divine laws and consent.” He described it as a company of pious members who were united in love. For a Christian, there is nothing novel in this bond, he noted, because it demanded only that which was worthy of man.⁵⁸

The perfect harmony between the Nāṣirī futuwwa and Islam, and the relationship between elders and juniors are themes that recur in Ibn al-Mī‘mār. He explains that theologians raised no objections to the legitimacy of the institution of the reformed brotherhood. The elder (*al-kabīr*) is an instructor in charge of the junior (*al-ṣaghīr*) who is his “adopted son.”⁵⁹ On the Armenian side, the second part of the *Constitution* is dedicated to precisely this spiritual-tutorial relationship between the elders or the mankawags and the juniors or the manuks.

In style and structure, there are strong traces of Ismā‘īlī Gnosticism both in the Arabic and Armenian texts. The tight ‘aṣabīyah or group feeling within the organization always distinguished these coalitions, but the reformers used it as a favorable ground for claims to mutually shared knowledge of the secrets of the group. This type of Gnosticism was typical to most Armenian and Islamic sects too (such as the T’ondrakians and the Ismā‘īlis); it was also a fundamental aspect of the *Rasā’il*. Al-Suhrawardī was a mystic and made the most of a popular form of Gnosticism. Indeed, both for the Armenians and the Muslims, participation in the reformed brotherhood implied participation in a superior gnosis or deep knowledge of true manhood, as intended by God for man. In *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāyā*, al-Khartabirtī described the futuwwa as a special “*ilm*” or sound knowledge.⁶⁰ According to Yovhannēs, being a manuk was a way to acquire privileged knowledge not only of the divine commandments, but also of a supreme philosophical order.⁶¹

VI. The Constitution Part One: “Definitions and Canons” (*Sabman ew Kanonk’*) and *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*

In the preface, Yovhannēs states the objectives of the reform initiative and the perspective in which the Church saw the concept and the institution of brotherhood. He introduces the subject by explaining the needs and exigencies of each of the soul and the body: the latter, he says, is nourished by food and the former by the Word of God. Since by nature man is inclined to, and capable of, both good and evil, the ways of life too—as expounded in the Bible—are divided into two: a narrow and difficult path that leads to salvation and a broad and easy road that takes man to destruction. He then cites familiar Biblical passages in support.

Ibn al-Mi'mār too devotes the first chapter of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* to the marks/signs of true futuwwa, supporting them by various testimonies and the *Hadīth*. Some of these marks/signs are performing duties, abandoning falsehood and lies, compassion toward orphans, generosity toward the needy, good will, studiousness, faith, purity, patience, hospitality, shame, etc.⁶² The theme of the second chapter is the relationship between the futuwwa and the Sharī'ah. Ibn al-Mi'mār considers Abraham the "source," or starting point (*mabda'*) and the "father of the fityān." The concept of true manhood, he says, is rooted in the Sharī'ah, but although "every fatā is a believer (*mutadayyin*), not every believer is a fatā."⁶³ In order to legitimize the initiative of Caliph al-Nāṣir and his personality as the model for the *fatā* (as presented in his Decree), he draws the caliph's ancestral line to the Prophet.⁶⁴ Yovhannēs takes Christ as the model and the divine word as ground for the conduct of the manuks, who are supposed to be receptive and outshine everyone else in the community. He says:⁶⁵

The sun rises for everyone, but he who has the clearest vision sees best, he says. Similarly, divine laws are common to all but he who embraces them and acts accordingly, as the manuks should, is truly enlightened and shines brightest of all.⁶⁶

Embracing the definitions and canons of the brotherhood, explains Yovhannēs, is an "oath" (*uxt*), a new type of social-spiritual commitment. *Uxt* in Armenian is in fact a transliterated form of Arabic '*ahd*. The futuwwa bond involves an oath, and the term is very often used in futuwwa texts in reference to the absolute commitment to the coalition. To distinguish the brotherhood of the manuks, Yovhannēs defines other types of brotherhoods too. The first is that which binds God's creatures, the second is between siblings, and the third is the brotherhood of people baptized in the same faith, or co-religionists. The brotherhood of the manuks is the fourth type. He says:

Sweet is the nature of this brotherhood. Gathered around the church, they [brothers] are like the stars that ornate the heavens. By mutual love and faith, and as brave soldiers united against the enemy, they can easily vanquish the Devil, and drive away his vicious spirits and evils.⁶⁷

After this long preface, Yovhannēs devotes three sections to the *Sahmank'* or definitions (exact equivalent of Arabic *ḥadd*, *ḥudūd* in plural) of the nature of the new coalition of brothers, which he calls

“our.” The first section deals with “personal conduct”; the second with the “benefit the brothers will find in the company of each other and the fruits of their coalition”; the third discusses the rules of “public conduct in the world among many nations, and the manner in which the brothers should cultivate wise and constructive behavior to glorify the name of Christ.”⁶⁸

The first chapter of the *Constitution* lists and elaborates ten laws for “adolescent youth” or *tlayahasak manuks*, (the exact equivalent of *ḥadīth al-sinn*). In summary these are: loving God, honoring one’s parents, honoring the clergy and paying them the dues [of the Church], premarital chastity and abstention of adultery after marriage, prayer (three times a day and other rites), attending church services, Confession, and Communion, decent speech, and controlling the senses (to prevent sinful thoughts and acts).⁶⁹

The third chapter of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* deals with the “attributes” and “requirements” of the *fatā* and *futuwwa*. Ibn al-Mi‘mār lists every possible sort of ascetic and religious virtue, embellished by verses quoted from various sources. “Futuwwa means being an enemy to oneself for the love of God,” he says.⁷⁰ He lists ten instructions as religious obligations or “commandments.” The terms and phrases are almost identical and the content surprisingly similar in the *Constitution* and *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, with the exception of dues to the Church in the first.

Mutual assistance in the harsh conditions of the world is the cornerstone of the *Rasā’il*’s doctrine of brotherhood. It is the subject of the second chapter of the *Constitution*, and five rules are set for this purpose. If anyone of the brothers suffers ill fate, poverty, and disease, writes Yovhannēs, or if he falls victim to vices, the brothers must do whatever is necessary to assist and rescue him. And if someone dies, they must give him a proper funeral and take care of his family. These brotherly duties formulated in Biblical language and spirit, are highlighted by passages from the Gospel of Matthew.⁷¹ In Chapters 6 and 7 of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, Ibn al-Mi‘mār discusses identical requirements of mutual assistance and sacrifice, but in much greater detail and stylistic elaboration. In general, the *Constitution* is brief, while *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* is written as an extensive *futuwwa* manual.

Both Ibn al-Mi‘mār and Yovhannēs adopt the principle of mutual assistance as the cornerstone of the brotherhood bond. When visiting a sick colleague, says Yovhannēs, the brothers should remember what Christ said: “I was sick and you visited me.”⁷² In *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* we

read: “He who helps a Muslim in this world will be treated similarly by God in the afterlife and God will extend His assistance to His servant, as long as the latter helps his brother.”⁷³ Ibn al-Mi‘mār quotes from the *Ḥadith*. The objective of both texts is to clear the brotherhood from the narrow context of a utilitarian coalition for strictly personal benefit. Assistance extended to travelers, both from and to other locations, is the subject of the third chapter of the Constitution.⁷⁴ It seems that the Church was trying to develop a network in the cities and vardapets, like Yovhannēs himself, had missionary-administrative functions and made regular journeys to various locations. He says,

... if a vardapet arrives in the city from abroad the senior brothers (*glxawor elbark'*) must visit him and present their respects and do their utmost to benefit from his wisdom. The brothers should gather to listen to his teaching of the Holy Scriptures. They should keep him company and see to his needs and return his spiritual labor with tangible [financial?] rewards. The same treatment is expected for monastics, pious brothers and vagrant ascetics.⁷⁵

Yovhannēs then has instructions about hospitality and proper behavior this time towards “other nations” or the Muslims. The following passage is of extreme significance:

The brothers must be peace loving among themselves and other nations. They should approach peoples of other races with good will and show good disposition in speech and audience. There are wise men among all nations and they should be respected and appreciated for their wisdom, [treated] without opposition and in a proper and peaceful manner.⁷⁶

There were leading akhīs in many cities of Asia Minor and Yovhannēs seems to be anxious to expose the Armenian brotherhood to their teachings. In addition to being a testimony to the cosmopolitan spirit of Yovhannēs and his respect for Islamic culture, this passage is indeed a very intriguing and rare piece of information about relations between the akhīs in the region and the Brotherhoods of Erznka.

In general, and as in futuwwa texts, the instructions in the *Constitution* imply the existence of adverse groups and practices on the ground. The “secular” (*ašxarhakan*) brothers or the manuks are advised not to collaborate with chaotic urban youth or the rogue. The members of the reformed brotherhood, says Yovhannēs, “should shine as gold coins in the mire of the world. As the bright sun, they should remain pure

amongst foul corruption, spread their goodness as sunlight, and like the latter, never be touched or contaminated by impurities.”⁷⁷

The next two paragraphs in the *Constitution* almost summarize Chapter 6 of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, which deals with organizational matters about the elders (*shaykhs*, *muqaddams*, *qā’ids*, *‘aqīds*, *abbs*, etc.). Ibn al-Mi’mār calls the members of the same group or “house” (*bayt*) colleagues or *rifāq*. In all cases, juniors or the “sons” must obey their “elders” or *kabīrs*. In turn, Yovhannēs explains:

There will be a leader at the head of each ten, and another over forty members and a general leader for all. The vardapets will be in charge and elders should deal with all matters with gentle advice.⁷⁸

The key concept in futuwwa texts is tight group feeling, solidarity, or *‘aṣabīyah*. The brothers constitute a “single body” (*jasad wāḥid*), says Ibn al-Mi’mār.⁷⁹ Using metaphors from the *Rasā’il*, Yovhannēs writes:

My honorable brothers, embellish yourselves by these laws and act as fortifications for each other. Just as stones are tightly stacked in rows and raised as walls in defense of the city, turn into living stones, because you will be unconquerable as you stand tightly held together by the love of God.⁸⁰ . . . As a lush paradise, become a heavenly garden embellished with pleasant fruits and sweet smelling flowers. As a royal crown ornate with gold, pearls, and precious stones, be a crown for our Christ and shine with your good deeds. Be the pride of your mother church, eat and drink [or live] for the glory of God. . . .⁸¹ [He concludes] Those who wish to join the brotherhood, will commit themselves to these canons and rules/definitions [*sahman*], which I wrote for the union. The adulterous, the foul-mouthed and the guilty of various vices, must abstain from joining. Those who conform to these terms are admitted into the brotherhood. The senior (*awag*) brothers are asked to gently guide the junior brothers, and the latter are to follow instructions obediently. The wise should not boast in vanity, and the ignorant should not despair. United in the name of Christ, you will take care of each other; the elders and the wise shall be held in respect and the young and the novice will be guided and treated with compassion.⁸²

VII. *Additional Canons (Krkin Kanonk’) Addressed to Manuks and Manktawags*

The sequel or the second part of the *Constitution* was written in the same year as the first, that is, in 1280. It was titled: “Additional Canons

and Advice by Yohanēs Vardapet Eznkayec’i for Secular Manuks, Who Conduct Physical and Worldly Lives and Whom We Intend to Instruct in Accordance with Divine Commandments and the Holy Scriptures, in Order to Redirect Them Towards Spiritual Virtues.” (*Norin Yohanēs Vardapeti Eznkayec’woy Krkin Kanonk’ ew Xratk’ Tlayahasak Mankanc’ Ašxarhakanac’, ork’ Marmnawor ew Erkrawor Xorhrdov Varen Zkeans Ašxarhis, zors ew Mēk Yastwacayin Awrinatc’n ew i Surb Groc’ Uttemk’ Zaynpisin i Hogeworn Šnorhawk’n Astuc’oy* (Henceforth, *Additional Canons* or *Krkin Kanonk’*).

It seems that in 1280, the Church managed to form a new brotherhood, and a colophon testifies to this. But while the *Constitution* marked the introduction of a new institution as an auxiliary to the Church by a direct Armenianization of the Nāširi reform project, the *Additional Canons* dealt with specific problems and legal matters. It was addressed particularly to the manktawags, who conducted “physical and worldly lives” as opposed to the principles of the brotherhood established and legalized by the Church-state earlier on. Almost certainly, there were also other organizations, which refused to join, and the Church made another attempt to contain and control them by a fresh initiative, this time addressed to the leaders of these manuks.

Additional Canons is addressed to those who “claim” to be manuks and manktawags, but lack the knowledge of the true nature of both. Consequently, new sets of conditions for both are restated and made mandatory. In general, however, the initiative to write a second text seems to be a compromise. Similar to al-Nāšir, the Church reluctantly accepted the existing brotherhoods as well, but made an attempt to reform them by spiritualizing the pagan and the generally secular institution of manktawags and their adopted sons (*ordegirs*). In the introduction of the text, Yovhannēs addresses his audience by a direct reference to Romans (VIII/5). The text is written for those “who live according to the flesh and set their minds on the things of the flesh.” Instead, they must “live according to the Spirit and set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

Three sections follow: 1. Definitions of the “true” manuks and manktawags, conditions and duties in each case, and the origin of the term manuk; 2. The five meanings of the initiation belt and a poem addressed to a pseudo-manktawag, called Yakob; 3. The initiation ceremony, procedures, questions and answers, reading of the conditions of *mankut’iwn* (the abstract noun, as in *fatā-futuwwa*, *manuk-mankut’iwn*), and the granting of the “*zunnar*” (or belt in Arabic).

Additional Canons reveals irregularities in popular customs and in the tradition of spiritual fathers and their spiritual sons in particular. Yovhannēs says:

The world is full of various customs [or traditions] one of which is the institution of manktawags and manuks. The former consider the latter their adopted sons [ordegir] and grant them belts. Nothing could eradicate this tradition, for it was ancient, sweet and pleasurable for those involved. [However] It was a bodily [*marmnakan*] and a mundane custom, which was practiced in ignorance. Since nothing could be done to remove it altogether, we took the initiative to advise and guide the public in the proper path of wisdom and the Holy Scriptures, and to make sure that no evil, ignorance and confusion penetrated into this relationship [of manktawag-manuk].⁸³

Homosexuality, or at least a “bodily” relationship between elder and younger men, is clearly implied here. The Armenian sectarians were regularly accused of “Persian customs.” In turn, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥidī directly accused the *fiṭyān* of homosexuality, as mentioned earlier. The aim of the second initiative, explains Yovhannēs, is to reform the manktawags, who . . . act and live by the rules of the flesh, without consulting their reason, which is the same with the divine law. These people are doomed and they must be guided and instructed by sound knowledge concerning their position, the nature and consequences of their actions.⁸⁴

Obviously, Yovhannēs directly accuses the corrupt leaders of the brotherhoods and holds them responsible for the failure of the reform initiative. In the first section, he sets down three questions: 1. Who are the true manuks? 2. Who is worthy of being an elder/senior [awag or *kabīr* in Arabic] for the manuks? 3. What is source/basis of the manuk-manktawag bond?⁸⁵ While he does not directly refer to the difficulties before the reform project, Ibn al-Mi‘mār, who was also facing similar difficulties, simply says: “It is not possible to accept anything less than the truth. . . . The fault (*‘ayb*) is either in the junior (al-*ṣaghīr*) or the elder (al-*kabīr*).”⁸⁶ He devotes Chapter 9 to the two hundred characteristics of the true *fatā* (*fatā fī’l-ḥaqīqah*).⁸⁷ Yovhannēs summarizes the subject in three conditions necessary for achieving true mankut‘iwn:

The manuk should cherish divine goodness and never lose sight of it; he should maintain his courage in the battle [of life] and never be defeated; he should make an effort not to abandon the things that he has committed himself to.⁸⁸

In sum, the ultimate duty of the true manuk is to preserve the purity and the beauty of the divine image in himself. Similar instructions were already given in the *Constitution*; writing *Additional Canons* within months seems to imply that although a commitment was made by at least some members of the brotherhood, others refused to enroll in the new organization set by the Church and, in the words of Yovhannēs, allowed the “Devil to win.”

While the difficulties on the ground were only implied in *Additional Canons*, the proofs are found in the literature of Kostandin Erznkac’i, a younger colleague of Yovhannēs in the brotherhood and a major figure of medieval Armenian lyrical poetry. The literature of Erznkac’i is the subject of the next chapter. Concentrating on the manktawags and indirectly accusing them of corrupt leadership and improper conduct, Yovhannēs stated four conditions for the eligibility of the candidate:

He should have knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and God’s commandments, because knowledge is like a lamp that spreads its light into the soul. The ignorant are like the blind, and as Christ said, “If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” [Matthew 15/14]. Second, it is necessary for the manktawag to lead an impeccable life, because more than good words, good deeds are instructive for the onlooker. The pure life is like [a bouquet of] fragrant flowers and incense, pleasurable to vision and smell. Third, it is necessary for the manktawag to perform [deliberately] good deeds. To gain people’s confidence, he ought to be compassionate and humane. As a father and parent, he should be a refuge to the abandoned and the estranged. He should have pity for the needy, the poor, orphans and widows. And those who are deprived of virtue and knowledge, he should take them under his protection, share their grief and care for them. Fourth, it is necessary for the manktawag to be a faithful member of the Church and follow its laws, for the Church is the high court of divine justice and grace.⁸⁹

The last section of Chapter 1 of *Additional Canons* brings a novelty: it is the *janabarhord* or traveler, in Arabic *musāfir*, in Turkish *konuk*, as a metaphor for manuk. We know that among the akhīs, hospitality for travelers was a primary virtue. A good part of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s chronicles were devoted to the narration of the customs of the akhīs, his gracious hosts. In this context, it is useful to cite a passage from Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s chronicles about the customs of the akhīs of Asia Minor, where he was around 1333.⁹⁰ At the time, the region was broken into twenty-five or more petty principalities, which followed the collapse of the Sultanate

of Iconium or Konya. His notes are most significant testimonies about the akhīs. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa wrote:

The singular [?] of the word *akhiyya* is *akhī*, pronounced like the word *akh* (brother) with the possessive pronoun of the first person singular. They exist in all the lands of the Turkmens of al-Rum, in every district, city and village. Nowhere in the world are there any to compare with them in the solicitude for strangers, and in ardor to serve food and satisfy wants, to restrain the hands of the tyrannous, not to kill the agents of police and those ruffians who join with them. An *akhī*, in their idiom, is a man whom the assembled members of his trade, together with others of the young unmarried men and those who have adopted the celibate life, chose to be their leader. That is (what is called) al-futuwwa also. The *Akhī* builds a hospice and furnishes it with rugs, lamps and what other equipment it requires. His associates work during the day to gain their livelihood, and after the afternoon prayer they bring him their collective earnings; with this they buy fruit, food, and other things needed for consumption of the hospice. If, during that day, a traveler alights at the town, they give him lodging with them; what they have purchased serves for their hospitality to him and he remains with them until his departure. If no newcomer arrives, they assemble themselves to partake of the food, and after eating they sing and dance. On the morrow they disperse to their occupations, and after the afternoon prayer they bring their collective earning to their leader. The members are called *fiṭyan*, and their leader, as we have said, the *akhi*. Nowhere in the world have I seen men more chivalrous in conduct than they are. The people of Shiraz and of Isfahan can compare with them in their conduct, but those are more affectionate to the wayfarer and show him more honor and kindness.⁹¹

By the year 1280, the term traveler or *musāfir* was also used for members of youth coalitions. Yovhannēs uses the word *janaparhord* (in Armenian *janabarh* means road, way, path; in Arabic, *ṭarīq*) with no reference to the existing mystical futuwwa literature where the word *ṭarīq* or *ṭarīqah* meant the “right path” in the mystical-gnostic sense. Many other concepts too are translated, as it were, into Christian terms. The absence of any literature about the brotherhoods makes it almost impossible to attempt any analysis or interpretation for the time being.

Heavily influenced by the gnostic spirit of the *Rasā'il* as well as Ibn al-Mī'mār, Yovhannēs uses the word traveler many times in his didactic poems addressed to the brotherhood as well as individual brothers. He knows exactly the meaning of the term but stops short of revealing its

sources. He asks, "Where did the term *manuk* originate from and why it came to be defined as 'traveler'?" But instead of giving an account of the historic and social background of the term in the context of the *futuwwa* as *ṭariqah*, he proposes an allegorical definition to bring the institution of the *manktawags* into Christian context:

The beginnings are in Christ and in His holy apostles. . . . Before the coming of Christ, people went about in the confused ways of sin, ignorance and atheism. Christ the Lord restored man to his infancy [original state] by Baptism. He removed the original sin and through the Scriptures gave him wisdom and recovered him from wrong ways. [He said] "I am the truth, the way and the life." [John, 14/6] After Christ and the Apostles, the fathers [of the Church] and the *vardapets* took over the task of guiding people in the path of God's commandments. To insure [protect] the piety of their sons, good Christians adopted the custom of assigning godfathers for their children. As the child grew up, the godfather performed the task of instructing the child in the Christian faith. The Church provided all that was necessary through the clergy, but it is also worthy of good Christians to become *manktawags* and compassionate caretakers of their spiritual sons. They will advise them by words and deeds, finally grant the [initiation] belts to their pious *manuks*.⁹²

Part Two is devoted to the symbolism of the belt or *goti*, he also uses the Arabic *zunnār*. Fastened around the middle of the body, the belt is a "fortifier," he says. Five types of belts are briefly presented, then the criteria for deserving the initiation belt to *mankut'iwn* are listed. They are: the belt of Baptism (embroidered in red and white, symbolizing the humanity and divinity of Christ); the clerical belt; the leather belt worn by ascetics; the military belt; and finally the "belt of travelers," meaning the *manuks*. Again, the passage is allegorical: "We are all travelers in this life," he says, and as such we must wear the "belt of chastity and temperance in our conduct."⁹³ The location of the belt in the middle of the body, just "beneath the ribs, on the liver and the kidneys" is symbolic of the control over the organs that are the seats of passions/instincts. Both the *manktawag* and the *manuk* must therefore understand the significance of the belt, but the former in particular should do so and assist his adopted son in the task. *Yovhannēs* explains:

The belt signifies purity and chains the great dragon of desire. As travelers fold the hem of their gown under their belts, you too check the passions you have for the things of the world. Turn your love and

aspirations toward God and raise your thoughts above this world of darkness and anxiety.⁹⁴

In the last part of this section, Yovhannēs suddenly takes an exit to a special case. He wages a direct offensive in vernacular and verse, against a certain “traveler”-manuk, who claimed to be a manktawag in a local brotherhood coalition.⁹⁵ “Do not make false and misleading claims to being a traveler, while in fact you are ignorant of the [true] path,” he says, and continues in verse:

You claim to be a traveler,
But go astray,
You love the name of mankut'iwn,
But lack the fairness of the manuk.
The path is narrow and difficult,
And you walk with your eyes shut.
Sweet is the nature of mankut'iwn,
But your conduct is bitter and unpleasant.
I will only call you a traveler
When you learn the *hadd* [definition, nature] of this path.
You are born into this world,
Tell me, where do you come from?
You have arrived in a strange country,
Show me how do you live?
If you die and are buried,
Tell me where will you go?⁹⁶

These lines were addressed not only to a notorious Gorguian Yakob Manktawag in Erznka, but also to all the corrupt leaders in the brotherhoods. One of the manuscripts of the *Additional Canons* is followed by another version of a very long poem addressed to a certain Manktawag Yakob, where Yovhannēs invites him to “wake up of his sinful slumbers.” There are many other versions of this poem. In the title paragraph of one version it is said that Yakob did in fact switch from a “physical” to a “spiritual” life, and that Yovhannēs Erznkac'i granted him a belt.

Chapter 3 of *Additional Canons* is a detailed description of the ceremony of granting the belt in the presence of all the members of the coalition. The *Constitution* is read and the novice is asked whether

he will obey the laws. He answers, "Yes, I obey." Then the manktawag comes forth and says: "My son, I have twelve commandments for you," and reads them to him. Briefly, these are: loving God and abandoning things of the world; performing the three prayers of the day and attending church service on Saturday and Sunday; regularly confessing to the priest (described as a "doctor of the soul"); obeying one's parents; loving work for one's livelihood, a passage is quoted from Psalm 128:2 "You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands. You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you"; living in peace with everyone and not being quarrelsome, for the "Son of God is peace-loving, and the belligerent agitators are the devil's offspring"; getting along without women and "staying away from foreign vices, and if someone is married, abstaining from adultery, for it is the equivalent of becoming a 'dog'; abstaining from drinking wine (an important part of the brothers' entertainment), because it is harmful (uses the Turkish word *dhiyan*, or harmful), and causes the loss of the soul, the mind, 'one's *arzāq* [possessions in Arabic] and family.'" The last commandment warns the manuk against seeking the "company of vicious people" and advises him to join "virtuous, wise and philosophical folk and try to emulate them." The manktawag then says, "I grant you the belt. Fasten it on your waist in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Fortify yourself with your belt as your heart is fortified with the love of God, and for the love of God keep His commandments." The rest of the commandments follow: "Behold your Christianity pure and do not falter . . . , denounce all the treasures and the glories of the world and adhere to your faith only, . . . consider the needs of your friends as yours, cry with those who cry and laugh with those who laugh." More instructions follow first in verse then in prose:

Do not speak ill with your tongue, for doing so will cause your downfall,

But if you confess your sins you will be saved,

Prayer means talking to God, do not be lethargic,

Live by the labor of your hands, and give thousand in return for one.

Do not be lazy and poor in skill and labor, because the redundant man is the seat of the Devil and the diligent man is the locus of the divine. It is only in the pious souls that the Holy Spirit will reside. God told Adam "By the sweat of your brow, you shall eat your bread" [Gen. 3:19], and Paul said, "the hand that does not labor will not feed." The Prophet David said, "You shall eat the fruit of the labor of

your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.” [Psalm 128:2]. The Lord taught us that it is in our prayers that we ask for our bread and in no other way. You make your living by your own sweat and labor and not by looting, theft, or the labor of others. These are all the instructions that the mankawags should give to their adopted sons. They will then fasten the belt around their waist and say God bless the brothers, Amēn.⁹⁷

Similar and much more complicated initiation rites and ceremonies were practiced among the courtly futuwwa, the Yazidīs, and the Bektāshīs, when the *murīd* or the novice was presented to the supreme authority and the community. Ibn al-Mi‘mār devotes three chapters to the subject of senior brothers or kabīrs, the initiation ceremony, and the symbolism of the zunnār. In Chapter 6, he discusses the functions of the senior brothers, their hierarchy, and details of the initiation ceremony. These are *al-shadd* or fastening of the belt, *al-takmil* or the oath, *al-libs* or putting on the official futuwwa pants or *sarāwīl*, and the drinking of the salt water or *al-shurb*. About the *kabīr* (equivalent of the mankawag), Ibn al-Mi‘mār says:

The kabīr is like a representative of the novice and testifies about the latter’s readiness before the whole group. Consequently, this elder should be the most perfect among the fityān both in intelligence and deeds (*atamm al-fityān ‘aqlan wa fi‘lan*).⁹⁸

As mentioned, we find identical statements in the *Constitution*, but in Ibn al-Mi‘mār, the term *abb* or father is used more frequently. His explanations of the rules of taking the oath (*ḥudūd al-takmil*) and *shadd* (the belt “at his middle,” *wasatuhu* or the waist)⁹⁹ very closely correspond to the last part of the *Additional Canons*, with the exception of *al-libs* (putting on the official costume) and *al-shurb* or drinking of salt water. There is no record or mention of special garments or pants that the manuks had to put on. Ibn Baṭṭūṭā speaks of a special tailed cap the akhīs wore. In Armenian histories there is no record of any accessories, except the belt. Much later, in the seventeenth century in Erzurum and during the nineteenth century in the Caucasus and Istanbul, the urban riff-raff—remote equivalents of the medieval urban youth or the rogue—had a special way of dressing up.

In Chapter 7 of *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, Ibn al-Mi‘mār speaks of the details of the initiation ceremony in the presence of all the members. As in *Additional Canons*, special texts of religious nature and style were read and the novice formally declared his commitment to the

oath.¹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Mi'mār explains the symbolism of the belt and the rest of the initiation norms (*sunnah*). As Yovhannēs explains too, the belt stood for temperance and control of the appetites, desires (*shahawāt* in *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*) of the lower parts (*asāfil* in *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*) of the body, between the umbilical cord and the knees. (The salt water in turn is given five meanings.)¹⁰¹

VIII. The Nāṣirī Program and Constitutions in the East European Armenian Communities—Fourteenth–Nineteenth Centuries

One of the most intriguing aspects of the adoption of al-Nāṣir's futuwwa reform project and literature by the Church/state in Erznka was its continuation with force in Armenian social history. The Armenian brotherhoods were active in most cities throughout the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries and they seem to have been marginal groups, at least as far as the Church was concerned. For example, T'oros Taronec'i relates that the great earthquake of 1287 was a punishment for the "sins the *ktričs*" committed. He also calls them *elpark'* or brothers.¹⁰² Over a century later, Grigor Tat'ewac'i and his student Matt'ēos Juḷayec'i spoke not very favorably of the urban coalitions of their time.

Following the fall of Ani to the Mongols before the middle of the thirteenth century, there were consecutive migrations of Armenians to the shores of the Black Sea and Crimea, and from there to what constitute today Moldova, west Ukraine, Poland, and western Romania or Transylvania. Later on, the deportations carried out by Safavid Shāh Abbās in the first few years of the seventeenth century caused a massive move of the Armenians from Van, Naxijewan, and other locations in eastern Asia Minor into the south and other directions. In all cases, wherever these communities settled, they revived their institutions including the urban youth and artisanal coalitions.

As the literary Armenian language itself evolved into the middle Armenian dialects, some changes occurred in the terminology used for the urban youth. Manuk was replaced by *ktrič*, which was in use previously too, but the word *elbayr* or brother was preserved to the end. In a colophon of a Bible in the Church of Immaculate Conception and the Holy Virgin of Stanislav (former name of the Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk), the donors are called *elbayrs*.¹⁰³ It is not clear whether they were artisanal brothers or members of "bachelors' brotherhoods," of the East European communities. Some, such as A. Karinean, believe that the *ktričs* and the artisans were closely linked at that time.¹⁰⁴ The suggestion is based on the hypothesis that the

brotherhoods were always artisanal coalitions. I have found no texts to support this observation.

Even though the institution of brotherhoods in its early form seems to have changed, the brotherhoods in some form have persisted in these Armenian communities. The last known mention of the term *manktawag* was in connection with a certain *Manktawag Kazur* in Kafa-Crimea, in the year 1334. The Ukrainian city of Kamenec'-Podolsk was one of the first locations where the emigrants from Ani arrived after the Mongol occupation of the city in late thirteenth century. A century later, another community was formed in Yazlovec', Ukraine. By the year 1344, the Armenians of Kamenec' were granted special privileges and some autonomy. In 1356, the Armenians of Lvov/Lviv (again in the Ukraine), enjoyed the same status.¹⁰⁵ In Kamenec', the governing body of the community was said to have been composed of forty "brothers," twelve of whom were elected as "judges" (*datawor*). The community of Kamenec' received more immigrants after the fall of Kafa and Crimea to the Turks in 1475.¹⁰⁶ The communities reorganized around the church,¹⁰⁷ and as in the past, the church tried to take charge of the various social and artisanal organizations. It seems that similar to other urban centers in medieval Europe during the fourteenth century, more than the secular authorities, coalitions such as guild oriented associations, depended on the religious institution for the protection of their rights.

Concerning the "governing brothers," M. Pjshkian reports seeing a songbook presented to a certain "brother" with the following dedication: "This is a souvenir to Baron T'at'ul, the son of Baron Grigor, one of the forty governing brothers of Kamenec', in the year 1644."¹⁰⁸ There were also brotherhoods of craftsmen or artisanal brotherhoods. The earliest mention of a "brotherhood of *ktričs*" in Kamenec' appears in an inscription in the Church of the Holy Virgin, in 1522, according to which half the price of the paintings placed in the church were paid by the *ktričs*.¹⁰⁹

Inevitably, in the newly formed urban centers, youth brotherhoods sought a role in the Armenian community, and as in Erznka, the Church intervened to maintain its status and control. On the 10th of November 1690, Archbishop Vardan of the Armenians of Poland was said to have ratified the "Definitions for the Brotherhood of *Ktričs*" of Stanislav by a special decree. The Brotherhood was initially founded by Archbishop Nicol T'orosovič'. During the period between 1660 and 1680, the Brotherhoods of the Holy Virgin (*Surb Astwacacin*) and

St. Grigor were organized in Lvov by the Community Council of the city and were under the latter's control. These associations were assigned to provide financial support to the clerics and be auxiliary institutions of the Church.¹¹⁰ In general, whenever any community needed to control its brotherhoods, the authorities issued a set of "sahmans and kanons," as they called them, closely following the prototype of Yovhannēs. The Brotherhood of Yazlovec' in turn had its "Definitions," issued by T'orosovič' in 1658.¹¹¹

There is another *Constitution* written for the brotherhoods of the Armenian communities during the middle of the seventeenth century. It was ratified by Catholicos Eliazar of Ējmiacin in 1690. In 1790, it was edited by Archbishop Yovsēp' Arlūt'ean and was applied until the year 1825.¹¹²

The Constitution for the brotherhoods of the "Armenian City" (or *Hayak'alak'*) of Keřla, in western Rumania, was the most elaborate. The Armenians of the city enjoyed a good deal of autonomy, they had three brotherhoods and the reform decree with a Constitution were issued on the 20th of August 1729 by Father Step'anos Step'anean. The Constitution was signed by Father Yovhannēs Yovhanean, the general secretary of the Church. Clearly, this initiative by the Church was to control the *azab eritaradk'* (bachelor youth, *a'zab* is bachelor in Arabic, *eritasard* is young man in Armenian).¹¹³ This multi-sectional Constitution is another major instance of the continuation of the legacy of Yovhannēs Erznkac'i. The circumstances of the youth organizations, which this document indirectly reflects, are almost identical with the *fityān* and *manuks* from Baghdad to Erznka during the thirteenth century. In turn written by a priest, the text was titled: "Canons and Obligations of the Brotherhood of Youth of the Holy Trinity." The members are called "brothers" and their society was the *Ktričaworac' Elbayrut'iwn* or Brotherhood of Braves. The introduction is as follows:

Our beloved sons in the Bachelors' Youth organization of the newly established city [of Keřla], humbly requested of us [the Church] to enter their brotherhood. This Brotherhood existed for a long time but without the canons of the church. Consequently we took upon ourselves to state and define the nature of the brotherhood and establish its canons. . . . Through this official decree [concerning its laws] we proclaim this brotherhood as the only true and lawful one and grant it all the rights and liberties to be enjoyed always and everywhere, similar to all other brotherhoods.¹¹⁴

History could not have repeated itself more closely. Passing through Erznka and over five hundred years later, the initiative of Caliph al-Nāṣir had another metamorphosis thousands of kilometers away, in an Armenian city in east Europe. There is also a “Decree of Definitions” (*Hrovardakn Sahmanacʻ*) for the Armenian community newly established in Rashkova, Poland, in 1747.¹¹⁵ Of the seven categories of sahman, the sixth is a set of rules for the brotherhoods and artisanal associations. It was obligatory for all the crafts to have their separate guilds, and each had its patron saint. There are details about fees, administration, elections, etc. The proceeds went to the Church, as the supreme authority of the community. What they called the “Bachelor Braves’ Union” came in this category. The members were referred to as “brothers” and the initiation was basically a religious ceremony of confession, communion, etc. Nothing is mentioned about their actual career or numbers.¹¹⁶ There are close similarities between the Constitutions of Rashkova and the *Constitution* written for the Armenian brotherhoods in Rumanian cities, and all invariably followed the model of Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi in spirit, strategy, and language.¹¹⁷

Age groups, from pre-pubescent boys’ groups to “bachelors’ unions” (*azab čahilner*, *čahil* is a Turkish word for adolescent, youth; it is a transliteration of the Arabic *jāhil*, ignorant) remained part of the Armenian society both in the Armenian habitat in the entire eastern Asia Minor and in the east European centers.¹¹⁸ These youth spent their free time learning songs, dances, plays, and games, etc. In their gathering places they had arms, spears, shields, knives, and other gadgets. During the major feasts and celebrations, they displayed wrestling matches, dances, folk plays, etc. They practically became the vehicles for the preservation of the folklore and the arts started much earlier by the urban youth coalitions.

As Xačʻatryan says, women too had their age groups and elders, or “teachers,” likened to “priestesses” in their own peculiar way.¹¹⁹ The communities deported to Nor Naxiĵewan (south of Russia) from Crimea in 1780, had brotherhoods of ktričs to the end of the nineteenth century. Their centers were called “Houses of Good Tidings” (*awetisi tner*). There is no record of any constitutions or internal regulations. There were similar groups in Ĵawaxkʻ (in the south of modern Georgia) and in turn, they were auxiliary organizations of the Church and on occasions provided entertainment to the community.¹²⁰

From the middle of the nineteenth century there is a fragment of information, which may be interpreted differently. In the year 1846,

an eighteen-year-old youth called Epiphan Yakob Popoyan started a “Spiritual Brotherhood” (*hogewor ėnkerut’iwn*) within his own age group called “Union of Brothers” (*Miabanut’iwn Elbarc’*). The members were called “followers,” they paid membership fees, and the head of the order (*kargapet*) had two assistants called “prime” members (*arajawor*). Instead of “helping the needy,” as they claimed, these youth accumulated great wealth by lending money at an interest rate of 18 percent. They fasted on Wednesdays, carried a whip, put on special costumes during their secret meetings, and read the Psalms. The organization was dismantled by the Church and renamed as the “The Brotherhood of Enthusiasts for National Assistance” or *Elbayrut’iwn Xraxusč’ac’ Azgašah Vastakoc’*.¹²¹

Terms like “manuk” and “miut’iwn mankanc” (union of manuks) seemed to be accepted in the language and social organization of Armenian communities without the institution itself in its more or less traditional form. For example, there is a small brochure printed in Istanbul titled *Miut’iwn Mankanc’ Ėnkerut’iwn* (Association of the Union of Manuks), established on March 12, 1878. The objective stated just under the title is “to assist the poor children of Armenia and to provide them with books and educational needs.”¹²² By “Armenia” they mean the Armenian Vilayets or the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, historic Western Armenia where most Armenians lived. The Constitution is nothing but lists of subjects like budget, membership, meetings, procedures, correspondence, inventories, and donations.

Notes

1. See Dadoyan, “The Constitution of the Brotherhood of Erzinjān (1280): An Armenization of the *Futuwwa* Reform Project and Literature of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh,” *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 29 (2003–2004): 117–65.
 - Lewon Xač’ikean, “1280 T’wakanin Erznkayum Kazmakerpwac *Elbayrut’iwnē* [The Brotherhood Organized in Erznka in 1280], *Telekagir of Armenian Academy of Sciences* 12 (1951): 73–84. Xač’ikean also published the *Constitution*: “Erznka K’alak’i Elbarc’ Miabanut’ean Kanonadrut’iwnē -1280” [The Constitution of the ‘Union of the Brothers’ of the City of Erznka-1280], *Patma Banasirakan Handēs* 6 (1962): 365–77.
2. Xač’ikean, “The Brotherhood,” 78.
3. Georges Duby, *Les Trois Ordres du Feudalisme* (Paris: 1978), 20.
4. Ašot G. Yovhannisean, “Hraparakumner-G. Axwerdeani ew G. Širmazaneani Namakap’oxanakutiwnē Vrastani ew Parskastani Hamk’arut’iwnneri masin” [Publications: The correspondence between G. Axverdean and

- G. Shirmazanean on the guild organizations of Georgia and Iran], *Patma-Banasirakan Handēs* 2 (1963): 187–217, 421.
5. Claude Cahen, “Futuwwa,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam-New Edition, II* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 961–69, 961.
6. Louis Massignon, *Opera Minora*, vol. I, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1963), 396.
7. Al-Basasirī relates that while traveling through Aleppo in 450/1058, he found the *aḥdāth* of the city more powerful than the governor. In 1098/490–491H, Turkish Aqsunqur appointed a certain Barakāt Ibn al-Fāris al-Fū‘ī known as al-Mujann, as the *ra‘īs* or the chief of the city. He was the leader of the *shuṭṭār*, the *quṭṭ‘ā’ al-turuq* and the *dhu‘ār* (or the mob, robbers, rogues), or simply the *aḥdāth* and competed with the Turkish ruler of the city Ruḍ wān Ibn Tutush in influence and wealth. Al-Mujann was eventually captured and after silently watching the execution of his two sons, he was killed on the Bāb al-Faraj, the historic central square of Aleppo. (Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Ta’rikh Ḥalab* [Cream of the History of Aleppo]. Edited by Sāmī al-Dahhān, 3 vols. vol. II (Damascus: Al-Ma‘had al-‘Arabī bi Dimashq, 1951–1968), 140–41). The Fāṭimids too had a hard time controlling these factions. In 999/389H the *aḥdāth* of Damascus drove away the Fāṭimid governor and Caliph al-Hākim had to dispatch his Berber troops to recover the city. The notables of Damascus secretly supported the *aḥdāth* and pretended to submit to the Fāṭimids. (Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab*, vol. II, 133–39). In 969/358H the *shuṭṭār* (another name for the urban youth, means smart in the negative sense) or the *aḥdāth* of Damascus had again fought the Maghribī troops of the Fāṭimids. The operation was led by their *ra‘īs* or chief, al-Sharīf Abū’l-Qāsim Aḥmad known as al-‘Aqīqī, who practically acted as the *ra‘īs* of the city too. Ibn al-Qalānīsī says that acting independently of city notables and internally divided into rival groups, these coalitions however “joined ranks in the face of enemies.” (Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Dhayl Ta’rikh Dimashq* [Continuation of the History of Damascus]. (Beirut: Maṭba‘at al-Abā’ al-Yasū‘iyyīn, 1908), 53–54.
8. Their chief was a semi-official figure called *ra‘īs al-balad* or “chief of the city.” They took part in official processions as the private guard of the prince. It was at their hands that the Ismā‘īlī Nizārī Assassins were massacred in 522/1128. See Claude Cahen, “Movements populaires et automisme urbain dans l’Asie Musulmane du moyen âge” No. I: *Arabica* V, no. 3 (1958): 225–50.
9. See Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab*, vol. II, 127, 134–35.
10. Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 151.
11. Claude Cahen, “Movements populaires et automisme urbain dans l’Asie Musulmane de moyen âge” No. I: *Arabica* VI. no. 1 (1959), 25–55, 44.
12. *Ibid.*, 48.
13. *Ibid.*, 25–26.
14. See Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, translated by R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952).
15. Ašot G. Yovhannisean, *Drwagner Hay Azatagrakan Mtk’i Patmut’ean* – I [Episodes in the history of Armenian liberationist thought], (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1957), 372.
16. K. P. At’oyan, *Razma-Sportayin Menamarterē Hayastanum—Hnaguyn Zamanakneric’ minjew XX Dar* [Para-military sports in Armenia from

- Ancient Times to the Twentieth century], (Erevan: Luys Publications, 1965), 44.
17. Y. Sufean, *Hay Memluknern u Išxannerë Fat'imiakan Šrjanin* [The Armenian Mamlûks and Princes during the Fatimid Period], (Cairo: Lusarjak, 1928), 23.
 18. At'oyan, "Para-military sports in Armenia," 140. Also see Matenadaran- Ms. #515, fol 27b; # 3569, fol 28a. The following is the list of sources At'oyan has in support of his view that para-military sports constituted an important institution in medieval Armenian culture, although they do not link them with urban youth:
 - Eznik Kołbac'i, *Refutation of the Sects* [Ełc Ałandoc'], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1826), 56–57.
 - Elishë, *Works* [Matenagrut'iwn], (Venice St. Lazar, 1859), 164; of the same author, *History of the Vardanank'* [Patmut'iwn Vardananc'], (Tbilisi: 1887), 176.
 - P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians* [Patmut'iwn Hayoc'], (Erevan: Haypethrat, 1947), 279–89.
 - Agat'angelos, *History* [Patmut'iwn], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1826), 44–47.
 - Łazar P'arpec'i, *History of the Armenians* [Patmut'iwn Hayoc'], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1873), 337.
 - Yovhan Mamikonean, *History of Taron* [Patmut'iwn Taronoy], (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Publications, 1941), 134–36.
 - Sebëos, *History of Heraclius* [Patmut'iwn i Heraclë], (Erevan: KHSSHM Armfan Publications, 1939), 57.
 - Yovhannës Kat'olikos, *History* [Patmut'iwn], (Jerusalem: Surb Yakob, 1867), 304.
 - Step'anos Asolik Taronec'i, *Universal History* [Tiezerakan Patmut'iwn], (Paris: Leroux, 1859), Book III.
 19. Pałtasarean, *Yovhannës Erzncac'in*, 68.
 20. Yovhannës Erzncac'i, *Krkin Kanonk' ew Xratk'*; henceforth *Additional Canons*, 231.
 21. Matthew, *Chronicle*, 242–43.
 22. See Matt'os Ĵulayec'i, *K'nnut'iwn Gorcoc' Arak'eloc'* [Study of the Works of the Apostles] Mat. Ms. #1402; Lewon Xaç'ikean, "Matt'eos Ĵulayec'u Keank'n u Matenagrut'yunë" [The life and literature of Matt'eos Ĵulayec'i], *Banber Matenadarani* 3 (1956), 57–84, 75–76.
 23. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, Ms. # 5732, fol 153a.
 24. T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, *Patmut'iwn Lang T'imuray ev Yajordac' iwroy'* [History of Lang Timur and his Successors], (Paris: K. Shahnazarian Press, 1860), 18. Also see Pałtasarean, Yovhannës Erzncac'i, 63.
 25. Xaç'ikean, "The Constitution of the 'Union of the Brothers' of the city of Erzncak-1280," 366.
 26. H. Mason, *Two Statesmen of Medieval Islam- Vizier Ibn Hubayra (499–560AH/1105–1165AD) and Caliph an-Nāšir li Dīn Allāh (553–622AH/1158–1225AD)*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 85–86. For this figure see Angelika Hartmann, *An-Nāšir li-Dīn Allāh (1180–1225): Politik, Religion, Kultur in der Speiten Abbasidenzeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975).
 27. Claude Cahen, "Sur les Traces des Premiers Akhis," *Melanges Fuad Koprulu* (Istanbul: Osman Yalçın Matbaasi, 1953), 81–91, 18–22.

28. Ibid., 90–91.
29. Ibid., 116.
30. Ibid., 104–105.
31. Ibid., 116–17.
32. Ibid., 102 n.51.
33. Ibid., 119.
34. Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, Ms #1582, fol 111, See Cahen, “Sur les traces des premiers akhīs,” 81–91, 18–22, 18.
35. Cited in Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-Zamān*, ed. Jewett, 280. According to this source, during the year 1194/590, ‘the caliph spilled the blood of the traveling pigeons and strangled them and erased their trace. He then bred their offspring, sent them to the *mashhads* and trained them to fly back to Baghdad. He assigned the *qāḍī* of *qāḍīs* or supreme judge Ibn al-Nacāri and Yūsuf al-‘Uqab, the chief of the *fityān*’ for the task. The newly trained pigeons were classified under twelve categories, each named after one of the twelve Imāms.
36. Ibn al-Mi’mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1958), Jawād, Introduction, 58–63. The decree is on 64–66.
37. Mason, *Two Statesmen*, 120.
38. Ibid., 121–23.
39. Franz Taeschner and Claude Cahen, “*Futuwwa*,” EI-NE, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 966.
40. Claude Cahen, “Notes sur les débuts de la *futuwwa* d’An-Nāṣir,” *Oriens* vol. VI, 30.6(1953), 82.
41. Taeschner and Cahen, “*Futuwwa*,” 966.
42. See George Vajda, “Les corps de métiers en Turquie- d’après deux publications de V. Gordlevskij,” *Revue des Études Islamique* VIII (1934), 79–88.
43. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 195–96.
44. Ibid., 340.
45. Taeschner and Cahen, “*Futuwwa*,” 966.
46. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 340–41.
47. The text is published by Abdalbaki Golpinarlı, İktisat Fakultesi Mecmusai, Istanbul University, vol. 11, 104, 1949/1950.
48. Franz Taeschner, “*Futuwwa*-Studien, die *Futuwwabunde* in der Turkei ind ihre Literatur,” *Islamica* 5 (1932), 285–333, 318.
49. Ibid., 339.
50. Mason, *Two Statesmen*, 123–24.
51. See his work on the *Futuwwa* in Aya Sofia Ms # 3135, fols. 154–158; See Mason, 124–25 n. 43.
52. The following is the content of the Aya Sofia collection # 2049 of major *futuwwa* works in Persian and Arabic (also see Taeschner, “*Futuwwa*-Studien, die *Futuwwabunde* in der Turkei ind ihre Literatur,” 313–17.
 - Naṣir ed-dīn al-Ṭūsī (1210–1273/607–672/, *Awṣāf al-Ashrāf*—Persian (fols. 1–15)
 - Treatise on Abū’l-Futūḥ al-‘Ajālī (fols. 16–34)
 - *Kitāb Mir’āt al-Muruwwah*—Arabic (fols. 35–77)
 - Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulāmī (330–412/941–1021), *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* (fols. 78–99)

- Akhī Aḥmad al-Muḥibb Ibn Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn Mikāil al-Ardabīlī *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* (fols. 99–107)
 - Aḥmad Ibn Ilyās al-Naqqāsh al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāyā* (fols. 108–117). This was a basic text for al-Nāṣir's official futuwwa often used as a reference. The book is dedicated to the caliph's son 'Alī after the latter's death in 1215/612. Al-Khartabirtī was a member of 'Alī's *futuwwa* group.
 - An anonymous Arabic treatise on *futuwwa* (fols. 118–137)
 - A collection of mixed literature on *futuwwa*, including the treatise by Shihāb ed-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (fol. 155 ff -in Persian)
 - In addition to the above collection, we have the following: *Kitāb al-Futuwwa* by al-Shaykh Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Makārim, or Ibn al-Mi'mār al-Baghdādī; *Nafā'is al-Funūn fi Masā'il al-'Uyūn* by Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd al-Amūlī; Yaḥyā Ibn Khalīl's Turkish *Futuvvetname* (second half of the fourteenth century); a complete Nāṣirī *futuvvetname* written in 1587 in T'okat'.
53. See Aya Sofia Ms. #2049, fol. 112a.
 54. Al-Nāṣir's Decree, in Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 64. Henceforth *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*.
 55. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 139.
 56. *Constitution*, 226; *Additional Canons*, 230.
 57. Yovhannēs Erznkac'ī, *Bank' C'ap'aw*, Poem #7, 215.
 58. *Constitution*, 221–22.
 59. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 192, 196.
 60. Al-Khartabirtī, *Tuḥfat al-Waṣāyā*, Aya Sofia Ms. #2049 (fols. 108–117, 108b).
 61. *Additional Canons*, 230–31.
 62. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 133–37.
 63. *Ibid.*, 139–40.
 64. *Ibid.*, 143–48.
 65. *Constitution*, 222.
 66. *Ibid.*, 223–24.
 67. *Ibid.*, 223.
 68. *Ibid.*
 69. *Ibid.*, 224–26.
 70. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 152–53.
 71. *Constitution*, 226–27.
 72. *Ibid.*, 226.
 73. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 196.
 74. *Constitution*, 227–28.
 75. *Ibid.*, 227.
 76. *Ibid.*
 77. *Ibid.*
 78. *Ibid.*, 228.
 79. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 195.
 80. *Constitution*, 227.
 81. *Ibid.*, 228.
 82. *Ibid.*
 83. *Additional Canons*, 231.

84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 203.
87. Ibid., 256–61.
88. *Additional Canons*, 231.
89. Ibid., 232.
90. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was born in 1304 in Tangier, and died in Morocco in 1368 or 1377. He made eight journeys or *riḥlahs*, from 1325–1353. His first journey was in 1325. His fourth journey in 1332, was from Egypt, to Syria, Asia Minor, Constantinople, then back to Afghanistan, Delhi where he arrived in 1333, and stayed until 1342. See Speros Vryonis Jr., “Travelers as a source for the Societies of the Middle East,” in Speros Vryonis Jr., *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, vol. II, (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981), vol. XV, 284–311, 295–96.
91. H. A. R. Gibb, ed. *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 4 vols. (Cambridge England: Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1958), vol. II, 418–20.
92. *Additional Canons*, 232–33.
93. Ibid., 235.
94. Ibid., 236.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., 236–37.
97. Ibid., 237–39.
98. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 204.
99. Ibid., 208.
100. Ibid., 250.
101. Ibid., 251–55.
102. Y. Kurtean, “T’oros Taronec’i,” *Taroni Arciw* 21–22 (1943), 139–40.
103. Minas Pjshkian, *Lehastani Hay Galt’akanut’iwnē*, [The Armenian Emigrations in Poland], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1830), 121. Pjshkian’s traveler’s notes are the most important source for the east European Armenian communities. He has information on Armenian communities in Moldavia, Poland, Lithuania, Rumania, and the Ukraine.
104. A. B. Karinean, *Aknarkner Hay Parberakan Mamuli Patmut’ean*, vol. I [Notes on the History of Armenian Periodical Literature], (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1956), 52–53.
105. Lewon Xaç’ikean, “Haykakan Galt’avayrerē Uk’raniayum -XVI-XVIII Darer” [Armenian Emigrant Communities in the Ukraine], *Telekagir of ASSR AS* 4 (1954), 45–80, 49.
106. Vardan R. Grigorean, “Arevmtean Ukraniayi Haykakan Galut’neri Ktričavorac’ Elbayrut’iwnneri masin” [The Brotherhoods of *ktričs* in the Armenian Communities of West Ukraine], *Patma-Banasirakan Handēs* 2 (1963), 115–27, 117.
107. E. M. Veale, “Craftsmen and the Economy of London in the fourteenth c.,” in *The Medieval Town—A Reader in English Urban History*, eds. E. Holt and G. Rosser, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1995), 120–140, 125.
108. Pjshkian, *The Armenian Emigrations*, 156.
109. Xaç’ikean, “Armenian Emigrant Communities,” 53; Pjshkian, *The Armenian Emigrations*, 149.

110. Grigorean, "The Brotherhoods of *Ktričs*," 119.
111. See a summary of it in H. Dashian, *C'uc'sak Hayerēn Jeragrac' Matenadaranin Mxit'aryan i Vienna* [List of Armenian Manuscripts in the Mxit'arist Library, Vienna], (Vienna: Mxit'arists, 1895), 923–24.
112. Grigorean, "The Brotherhoods of *Ktričs*," 11.
113. Grigor Covrigian, *Dransilvanioy Hay Metropolisē—Kam Nkaragir Keṛla Hayak'alak'i i Gir ew i Patkers* [The Armenian Metropolis of Transylvania or the Nature of the Armenian City of Keṛla in Word and Picture], (Vienna: Mxit'arists, 1896), 75.
114. Ibid.
115. Pjshkian, *The Armenian Emigrations*, 175–84.
116. Ibid., 182–83.
117. Grigorean, "The brotherhoods of *Ktričs*," 119.
118. J. K. Xač'atrean, "Hasakakic'neri Miut'iwnnerē ḡavaxk'um" [Age-Group Associations in ḡawaxk'), *Patma-Banasirakan Handēs* 1 (1968), 203–11, 203–11.
119. Ibid., 210.
120. See K. A. P'orkšeyan, "Nor Naxijewani Hay Giwleri Kētričneri Miut'iwnneri masin" [Concerning the Associations of the *Ktričs* of the Armenian villages of Nor Naxijewan], *Patma-Banasirakan Handēs*, 3 (1966), 184–92.
121. Ibid., 191–92.
122. In Armenian: *Hayastani alk'atik tlayoc' girk' ew usman biduyk' hayt'ayt'el*.

Urbanization of Culture— The Cultural Significance of the *Fityān* and *Manuks*

I. The Contrast: The Reform Projects and the Realities of Urban Society and Its Culture

The social-cultural role of the *fityān* and *manuks* is probably one of the most significant yet least studied aspects of the subject. Both in Arab and Armenian societies, the reform projects had very limited and temporary success depending on the political effectiveness of the reforming establishment. The gap persisted between the actual culture of urban youth coalitions and their idealizations in literature. Some historians, like Jawād, make simplistic distinctions between two types of *futuwwa*: ascetic (*mutaṣawwifah*) and playful-hedonistic (*lāhiyah*). The classification holds only if “ascetic” meant reformed and “playful” referred to the *fityān*-‘*ayyārūn*-*aḥdāth* on the ground. But this was not the case. The distinguishing aspect of urban youth coalitions was surely not the purity or the impurity of their morals and conduct, but their social-cultural role.

Amidst social-political decentralization and a great variety of religious ideologies, the urban majority of modest means found its way into the social structure and shaped its own cultural identity through the arts. Often described as hedonistic and chaotic young men—which they were in fact—by Armenian and Islamic authors, the folklore of these youth lay the grounds for the urban lower-middle class and secular culture in the entire Near East. This is the main argument of this chapter. Their lifestyle, folklore, and arts/entertainment created new literary and artistic forms and genres and wide audiences because of their essentially popular and grass-root nature. Similar circumstances in the medieval cities of the Near East were proper environments for a cultural evolution that superseded and reduced religious and ethnic differences.

II. The Medieval Urban Artworld

Often caught in the tensions of an uncertain future and unstable resources, the need for entertainment and self-expression as a class marked the folklore and lifestyle of urban youth. Song, poetry, dance, drinking and feasting, and love of women/men constituted their folklore in the newly developing cities of the ninth century. There are many chronicles about drinking parties held in gardens, public baths, and private houses. Minstrels, (for example, someone like Ḥusayn al-Ḥirī (a Christian man from al-Ḥirah) was a vagrant poet-singer), were the equivalent of the Armenian *gusans* or troubadours. When their art failed to please the audience, they were dismissed and sometimes beaten. On this level and for these audiences, there were also professional dancers and instrumentalists of both sexes.

The point is that there was an urban popular artworld, with particular criteria for excellence and taste. Even though deeply spiritual, this artworld had little to do with any of the religions and trends in the region. In fact, some trends like the *dervishes* and Armenian sectarians had their arts of dance and percussion. Parallel to the richer classes in cities, a modest but very large layer of society too had developed and generated its own aesthetics and exigencies. In the eyes of the religious institutions at least, these practices were objectionable. Often political and religious figures expressed their displeasure toward the rebellious, wild, and vulgar character of popular arts and entertainment.¹ But an artworld forced itself into the culture of the cities and embodied the tastes of masses and the slowly developing urban merchant and artisanal classes, as well as the youth coalitions.

In al-Isfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* of the tenth century there are several chronicles about poets who were hired to sing in the parties of the *fityān*. Ḥunayn al-Qusrī once traveled from al-Ḥirah to Ḥimṣ to sing for a group of *fityān* there. These young men congregated in public baths; Ḥunayn al-Qusrī found a group in one of the baths and offered them his services as singer and *'ūd* (Arabic guitar) player. The group then moved to the house of one of them where they banqueted and were entertained by singers and dancers. However, it seems that the *fityān* were not an easy public to impress, and as the story goes, Ḥunayn al-Qusrī was dismissed unpaid. It is told that another famous poet-singer known as Ma'bad Ibn Wahb was dismissed too with no pay for failing to please his audience.² Some of these singers were themselves members of the *futuwwa*. For example, a poet of the ninth century, Ishāq

Ibn Khalaf or Ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Baḥrānī was a fatā³ who sang lyrical poems on secular themes. There are two beautiful excerpts from him dedicated to the memory of a niece he brought up as a daughter.⁴

The lifestyle of the fityān and the manuks was always criticized. Drinking, forbidden in Islam and discouraged by the Church, was central to their parties and culture. These youth used to drink even on the tombs of their departed colleagues. It is told that the tomb of poet-singer Abū Hindī Ghālib Ibn al-Qaddūs, a member of the futuwwa, and the first Arab poet to dedicate his poetry to wine, was often visited by his fellow brothers, who drank and poured his share on his grave.⁵ This custom is still maintained in some parts of the Near East. The language of the fityān was naturally part of their lifestyle and was viewed as another symptom of their libertine morality and refusal to comply with accepted norms.⁶ Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, a sympathizer of the Brethren of Purity, has very negative accounts about the fityān of Baghdad. He accuses them of lewd and reckless conduct, alluding to homosexual practices too.⁷ ‘Alī Ibn al-Jahm, an ‘Abbāsīd poet who befriended a group of them, tells that the fityān invited female dancers to their parties, which they usually held in the house of one of their chiefs called al-Mufaḍḍal (a man from al-Karkh), whose generosity and hospitality he praises. He speaks of the “favors” of the latter’s “*ghilmān*” (plural of *ghulām*, adolescent, young boy) and “*qayyāns*” (somehow high-class female entertainer, companion) to the guests.⁸

The situation was almost identical in Armenian cities. At least fifteen of the twenty-seven poems of Kostandin Erznakac’i (c. 1250–1330) that have reached us are about and/or for the brothers. He often mentions that he wrote songs at their request, to be sung at their gatherings in Erznka. He must have been a well-known poet in the 1280s, when the brotherhood reform project was launched and his compatriot Yovhannēs Erznakac’i was personally involved.⁹

About a century later, the situation was unchanged and the reform projects made little difference. Describing the life of the “lewd,” “rough,” and “arrogant” young men in the cities, Matt’ēos Ḵulayec’i wrote: “Every day the lewd youth and the riff-raff of the city gathered and performed all sorts of obscenities in parties which they called *sayran*.”¹⁰ They hired female dancers and *gusans* (vagrant poet-singers, troubadours) who sang *tals* (song-poem) and *hayrēns* (verses of secular content).

The Church associated the culture of the “young men of the cities” with hedonism and heresy.¹¹ In addition to song, dance, and banquets these men were also entertained by farces, which Mxit’ar Aparanec’i

described as “satanic” and their audiences “shameless.” Although he says no physical harm was inflicted, these plays corrupted the souls of people.¹² Mattēos directly accuses the Armenian sectarians of corrupting the youth and leading them to hedonistic ways; he says that “they preach nothing but eating, drinking and pursuit of pleasures.”¹³

This culture must have been common to all urban centers. According to Kirakos Ganjakec’i, in view of such practices and the vulgar nature of popular entertainment, in Cilicia, Catholicos Nersēs Šnorhali replaced the “wild” folk songs and “fake” fables with poems in the vernacular, but of a “higher” content. “Instead of fictitious . . . legends,” he says, “they recited the verses of Šnorhali during their drinking and wedding parties.”¹⁴

In Erzinka, Kostandin and probably other lesser poets too sang love poems in the brothers’ loud garden parties. As Kostandin says, “music rose to the heaven, dancers swirled and wine flowed.” Yovhannēs too wrote poetry, but of a didactic nature, for his reformed brotherhood. Taken together, the poems of these two “brothers” from Erzinka reconstruct the times and the actual lifestyle of the manuks during the late thirteenth century and the first quarter of the next, at least.

The cosmopolitan city of Erzinka, where all sorts of youth of various religious and ethnic backgrounds gathered, was an ideal environment for the shaping of an extra-ethnic and extra-religious, secular, and popular urban culture. Arab and Persian literary forms and terms were readily assimilated. Continuing my argument, I see this process as part of the evolution of the urbanization/secularization of society, and the fityān/manuks as one of the most important vehicles in this process.

With respect to poetry, Grigor Narekac’i (d. 1003), one of the most important poets and dissident figures of medieval Armenian culture, played a major role in laying the ground for lyrical literature in Rštunik’, in the province of Vaspurakan (east of Lake Van). The peculiar synthesis of the spiritual and secular value systems and the corresponding aesthetic, language, and sensibilities in Narekac’i’s works reflected the age and more importantly the Near Eastern milieu in southeastern Asia Minor. After over a century-and-a-half, his influence surfaced in Cilicia. Also, it was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that his legacy metamorphosed into a long line of *gusans* and poets in Erzinka and elsewhere and evolved to the present day. Many verses of Kostandin and Yovhannēs bear striking traces of Narekian poetic forms, language, and perceptions of nature. Despite its efforts, the Armenian Church

could not possibly eradicate popular culture, and popular culture and arts found their paths. In fact, during the later middle ages and modern times, the Church recruited youth coalitions to provide entertainment at various feasts and celebrations.

From the beginning, the contrast between the physical and spiritual values/lives became a literary motif in brotherhood poetry. We find the motif in monumental dimensions in Narekac'i's work. In one of his poems, Kostandin begs an elder brother, who seems to be scolding him, to understand that his soul is ready to hear words of wisdom but his body, child of the earth, is driven towards pleasures: "Fire drives me upward and earth pulls me downward," he explains.¹⁵ In the poetry of the *fityān* too, the contrast between "two worlds" and "two natures" is a recurring motif. This is the theme of the *ḥikāyah* (story) of 'Abd Allāh Ibn'Abd al-Raḥmān (as cited in Ibn al-Mi'mār's *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*).

The ascetic and mystical version of the *futuwwa* promoted by leading figures like al-Suhrawardī created a mystical trend at least on the literary level. There are many verses in all the Nāṣirī texts where the *fityān* are warned against the dangers of losing the other life while enjoying the pleasures of youth in this world. Causing injustice and harm will eventually find its punishment, says one poet, for nothing goes unnoticed by the ever-vigilant eye of God.¹⁶ In another context, the worldly life of young people, health, energy, and rough conduct is put in a balance with its consequences in the other life.¹⁷ As a man of the church, Yovhannēs naturally gave absolute priority to the other life, but for a poet like Kostandin, the conflict was the very substance of life and his poetry.

Despite his inner conflict, Kostandin was very much aware of his prerogatives. He gives advice to a junior brother, whom he describes as "*bewafa*" (dissident, *rāfiḍ*, and unbeliever) and "not of his blood" (non-Armenian). This "*elbayr*" or brother seems to have joined "market gangs," "murtadd's (rebels), "adolescents," and "renegades," who are "sweet in words but lethal in deeds." He invites him to come to his senses and weigh the consequences of the wrong choice of company and values.¹⁸

This non-Armenian brother of Kostandin stands as a rare proof of the mixed membership of these coalitions. In fact, Christians were allowed in the Nāṣirī *futuwwa* and were granted belts, but since the *futuwwa* was based on Islam, they could not become full members.¹⁹ Slaves could join too, but women were prohibited for their intellectual and practical

“deficiency.”²⁰ Furthermore, it seems that some of the Brotherhoods in Erznka at least, included wealthy figures too. One of Kostandin’s closest friends was a certain Baron Polin Kalaymach, or Baron Amir, probably from Tabriz.²¹ Kostandin dedicated some poems to him too. We also know that this man made a collection of Kostandin’s poems.

III. The Urban Coalitions and the Sects: Marginal Communities and Perspectives

The diffusion of heterodox factions and their culture in the youth coalitions has a direct bearing on our subject. The city of Erznka and the broader region of Daranali in central north Asia Minor was a haven for heterodox factions as of the early periods of Christianity, and continued to be so in the thirteenth century and later.²² But what concerns us is the proof in brotherhood literature itself. There is at least one such instance, which indicates to the penetration of sectarians into the brotherhoods. As mentioned, on several occasions Yovhannēs addresses a certain “Yakob Manktawag,” and dedicates a superb poem to a hypothetical dialogue with the latter. Identity of dates and locations justifies the assumption that this person may have been the notorious Gorguian Yakob, as mentioned earlier.²³

The case of Gorguian Yakob Manktawag in Erznka establishes, on the one hand, the link between sects and brotherhoods in Armenia, and on the other, between sects and militant factions of the tenth and eleventh centuries in al-Shām, Syria, and Cilicia, from where the troublesome Gorguians came,²⁴ as observed by A. Yovhannissean as well.²⁵ Mxit’ar Aparanec’i speaks of the *Gorguec’oc ‘aland* (or the sect of Gorguians), and identifies them with the sun worshippers or the *Arewardik’*. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there were still militant syncretistic sectarians, who were identified as sun worshippers. Sun worship, rather, fire worship, was always part of all heterodox factions.

The founder of the sect, Gorg (short for Gēworg or George), was originally from Cilicia and preached, as it was said, at the Monastery of Armēn at Lambron in the west. Apparently, with his followers, he fled from persecution and ended up in Erznka, where he resumed his career. Again like many sects, the Gorguians too concealed their true faith and never held service in public. Aparanec’i says that a disciple of Gorg, a certain Mosēs, who was in turn a Cilician refugee in Erznka, swore “never to utter the Lord’s Prayer in the church or outside it, but only in his mind and in secret.”²⁶

There is another reference to the Gorguians by Grigor Daranafec'i in his *Chronicle* (*Žamanakagrut' iwn*).²⁷ He describes them as "betrayers of the true faith," confused and preoccupied by their illusions. These people, he says, resorted to Erznka in search of spiritual comfort and peace. According to Aparanec'i, the Gorguians believed that they were the descendants of Noah, and that Christ himself embodied the Trinity, which perished when Christ was tortured and killed. In other words, they simply denied the Trinity, as did most other sects. This is what they believed in, says Aparanec'i, and this is what Yakob Manktawag repeated in his daily prayers and talks.²⁸ Thus, these Gorguians, he adds, drowned in their sinful beliefs.²⁹ There is a third mention of the Gorguians in a colophon of 1272 at the end of a Bible:

I Grigor, a stranger wrote this as much as my capacities allowed at the monastery of Eriza [or Erznka] and the Church of the Holy Virgin, under the protection of Saint Lusavoriç' and the guidance and patronage of Gorg, may God reward him and the other secular brothers [or the manuks], who serve the word of Christ. These are imperishable pearls for His glory.³⁰

The colophon predates the initiative of the Church and the *Constitution* of Yovhannēs. Gorg had followers among the manuks; however, it is not clear whether, under his leadership, his followers formed a coalition of their own. In the poem, Yovhannēs is simply trying to persuade or coerce him to join the official brotherhood of the Church, and probably trying to subdue sectarian influence at Erznka and eliminate a rival brotherhood. So far, I have found no texts or sources to shed light on these matters.

The cosmopolitan environment in most cities blurred the demarcation lines between hedonistic urban youth, religious heresies, and brotherhood coalitions. The link between common hedonism—of which all the dissidents were systematically accused—and heterodoxy/blasphemy in the case of the brotherhoods in particular, simultaneously concealed and revealed the extra-religious culture of the youth brotherhoods. In the end, heresy simply meant a choice to deviate from the norms set by the religious and political institutions, and it is not at all surprising to find such trends throughout.

Dissident cultural trends and heresies were still active in the fourteenth century in Cilicia, and on the mainland in Siwnik' in the east. Mxit'ar Aparanec'i speaks about heresiarchs Šmawon, Łlat', Yovan, and Vahram, who appeared at the end of the thirteenth century. Like all

the sectarians before them, they rejected the sacraments, the hierarchy of the Church, and the role of the clergy. They were persecuted by catholicos Kostandin II Kesarac'i (1307–1322) and King Ošin of Cilicia (1308–1320). About five hundred of them were exiled to Cyprus where these “evil men converted to Islam and continued to sow the seeds of mischief.” Those who objected to the Latinization of the Armenian Church and the decisions of the Council of Sis in 1306/7 also seem to have joined the rebels. But it is not clear whether the exiled were simply staunch defenders of the Armenian Apostolic faith or dissidents with different causes, or simply all those who objected to the policies of the Church and the monarchy.³¹ The motif of conversion to Islam is again implemented, and the alleged Islamic connection reestablished as late as the fourteenth century. Hence, the importance of following these threads from the fourth to the fourteenth century. My arguments do indeed find some grounding in the sequence and recurrence of identical patterns.

In Arab histories, the only reference to some kind of fusion between sect and brotherhood is made by Ibn Jubayr, the famous Arab traveler from Spain. He came to the region for a pilgrimage and visited many locations between the years 1183 and 1185. In the summer of 1184 he was in Syria, which according to him was infested by all sorts of sects and heretics. It was around this time that ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir was initiated into the futuwwa. He relates that he met a “strange” Sunnī faction known as the Nubūwīyyah, who were followers of the Qur’ānic ideals of the futuwwa. This futuwwa group formed a close-knit organization of mutual assistance. For them friendship and loyalty were highly valued virtues. More importantly, the Nubūwīyyah made it their duty to eliminate the *rāfiḍ* or the dissenting non-orthodox Muslims wherever they were found.³² It meant liquidating the Shī‘īs, Ismā‘īlīs, Nuṣayrīs, Druzes, and others in al-Shām, and this is precisely what they did.

The lifestyle and the extra-religious and extra-ethnic culture of youth coalitions were under constant attack by all the religious and political institutions everywhere. The evening and garden parties of the fityān/manuks were perhaps the most important elements of this culture. It was during these gatherings that poets recited their verses, musicians played, and dancers performed. Judging from the poems of Kostandin, Erznka was not much different from all the cities of the Near East. There were qayyāns and instrumentalists, singers, caterers, and other social types. The qayyāns were beautiful, educated women, who wrote poetry,

sang, danced, and played instruments. They were companions even to caliphs and princes. In Islam, as in other ancient and medieval cultures, traditionally, female singers and tambourine (*daff*) players were common and accepted figures. In a text by Ibn al-Ṭūṣī written for the *samāʿ* or audience of the Brothers of Erznka mentioned earlier, there is a couplet sung by two *dāribāt al-daff* (female tambourine players) who are described as addressing the Prophet as “the Messenger of God” and the “light within lights.”³³ This reference to female singers addressing mystical verses to the Prophet does indeed provide some legitimacy to the futuwwa culture of poetry and music, even to female entertainers too. But in Armenian culture, entertainment at the parties of urban youth was regarded highly undesirable and condemned.

IV. Kostandin Erznkac'i: Two Worlds and Two Natures in Man

Of the twenty-seven poems that have reached us from Kostandin Erznkac'i, most are written either at the request of the brothers for their parties or are his meditations on the brotherhood and himself. The brotherhood seems to be the only social circle of this figure. As he related, singers, dancers, and instrumentalists attended the brethren's parties. He calls the singers *mtrup* (*muṭrib* or singer in Arabic, from *ṭaraba*, to sing). One of the most explicit and lyrical descriptions of the brothers' gatherings (or *majlis*) is a poem entitled “Song of Spring and Joy.” It starts with an invitation to the manuks of “all races” to come out of the darkness of winter into the sunshine and warmth of the meadows and the orchards³⁴:

Come and let us enter the garden, and
Let me tell you thousand tales.
Lovers, wherever there may be,
Let them all come to us.

...

I will set a *majlis* in the fields,
Where the nightingale is drunk,
And the *sati* of the great house³⁵
Will serve us the wine.

Sati, fill up the flask and pass it to me,
My heart is full of love,
Let me drink this cup
Overflowing with wine.

Mtrup play your *chashta* and³⁶
Let the *morj* dance in the middle,
O maiden slim and tall,
Your image is like the moon.

On the music of the “chashta” player and drinking the wine served by the *salis*, Kostandin sings to the beauty of the “*morj*” or the slim dancer.³⁷ The joys of love, simple pleasures of nature, wine, and company are recurring themes, and surely there is nothing strange in the situation. The non-Armenian ethnic background of the singers and dancers is of some relevance to our subject. Entertainment was extra-ethnic just as the membership of the brotherhoods was. But all the same, the brothers were “close to his heart,” and Kostandin gladly responded to their requests to sing of “things of the world,” as he says in the “Song of Love.”³⁸

Love or *‘ishq* is basic to brotherhood culture and literature. The *Rasā’il* devotes long analyses to the subject, but as discussed earlier, Yovhannēs deliberately avoided it in his *Views*. For a poet like Kostandin, love is a very complex theme because it combined both romantic love and spiritual devotion. Similar to the double nature of reality divided into material and intelligible levels, physical and spiritual, love too had a double nature depending on its object. The dual nature of love was a motif in brotherhood poetry. It reflected and embodied the dualism of two worlds, two moralities, two criteria of true manliness, two levels of the futuwwa itself (the reality of their culture and the idealized futuwwa). In this respect the evidence of history is scarce, but poetry and arts are partial replacements. Ibn al-Mi‘mār tells a *ḥikāyāh* or story/legend about a certain fatā called ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who fell in love with a qayyān called Salāmah al-Mughanniyyah (singer), whom he heard singing. She was offered to him as a gift, and even though she shared his feelings, ‘Abd Allāh refrained from approaching her. He loved her so much that he was afraid of God’s punishment upon both of them for succumbing to physical passion and that any contact would separate them permanently in the afterlife. The girl came to be known as *Salāmah al-Qas*.³⁹ Just as physical love, true love in turn had a legitimate and honorable status in futuwwa norms and culture. There is another *ḥikāyāh* about an affair between a *jāriyah* (concubine) of Umayyad ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān (685/66H–705/86H) and one of his men, whom he imprisoned. In view of their love for each other, they were allowed to get married and were

granted freedom by their master.⁴⁰ In Kostandin's poetry, the subject of love recurs in many contexts and forms, only to indicate that the poet refused to confine himself to the norms of the Church concerning the recommended bond between a man and a woman. In a poem dedicated to "The Gentle Spring," he wrote⁴¹:

Let all people rejoice today,
All those who have a true friend, and
All those whom love has united with us here,
Let all enjoy the sweet wine.

His allegorical "Poem about Christ through the Example of the Rose"⁴² is a dramatization of the status and significance of the Rose/Christ/Love as the ultimate force. It started by the celebration of spring, love, and poetry: "Every singing bird has love and much desire in his heart, for he is made for love and sings because of it." One day, as the story goes, the sly and cunning Violet gathered the other flowers of the garden and warned them of the beauty of the Rose, which attracted attention and left the rest of the flowers in the shadow. As the flowers were planning to cut down the Rose tree, the nightingale overheard them and woke up the Rose. The Rose came out of the glorious green tent dressed in shining colors. Embarrassed and ashamed, some of the flowers fled to the mountains, others wore blue in mourning while the Rose prevailed at the center of the garden with the nightingale singing to beauty. Love is Christ, as the symbol of the Rose indicated too. According to Kostandin, it is the essence and motive power of all existence, beauty, light, peace, friendship, and health. The "yellow heart" of the Rose testified to the sorrows inflicted by the envious.

Obviously, some people in Erzinka, and the Church in particular, objected to the secular content of the poem. Kostandin wrote a second poem titled "Brief Interpretation of the Poem of the Rose, for the Ignorant Who Believed That I Wrote the Rose for Physical Love."⁴³ The flowers, he said, are the ministers (*k'ahanayk'*), the Rose is Christ, the Violet is Judas, the Nightingale is the trumpet of Resurrection (*p'ot yarut'ean*), the Rose that woke up and wore the scarlet gown is resurrecting Christ rising to heaven, the flowers which withered are the soldiers who fell around the tomb, others are the guards who ran away, and those who wore blue in shame are the Jews. The desire of the Rose to be made into rose water for the sick and needy is the body of Christ and the bread of the Eucharist, etc.

Kostandin concludes this purely Christian symbolism by a philosophical observation that revealed the true meaning of love in the poem: "It is your duty, Kostandin to claim in great hope your share in Love, to taste and enjoy it and to be intoxicated by it." With no scruples about the doctrinal problems involved in his almost pantheistic celebration of universal love, and seeing no contradiction between Christianity and his outlook, he concluded by a classic statement glorifying God and the Trinity. At the time, the acceptance and/or the rejection of the Trinity defined the dichotomies between orthodoxy and heresy. While the idealistic criteria of the reform programs for the *futuwwa*/*mankut'iwn* invested on the contrast between the two worlds—the "lower" being physical and the "higher" spiritual—this gap was bridged in Kostandin's pantheistic universe diffused and governed by love. Three centuries earlier, Grigor Narekac'i unified the Christian universe by a direct address to God and man's comfortable position in a rediscovered/regained world of beauty and love. He wrote the first poems on love as the motive force on all levels. In the case of the youth coalitions, the discrepancy between their mundane-urban culture and the spiritualized projects was translated into a conflict with the establishments.

In Islamic society and culture, the ascetic and mystical version of the *futuwwa*—promoted by leading figures like al-Suhrawardī—deepened the chasm between two sets of criteria for the institution. The Nāṣirī texts warned the *fiṭyān* of the dangers of losing the other life. Similarly, as a man of the church, Yovhannēs gave absolute priority to the other life, but for Kostandin the situation was much more complicated. The poem of the Rose and its sequel, the "Interpretation," revealed the ongoing dispute and the displeasure of some brotherhood reformists at the circle of Kostandin, and him in particular. While the brothers felt that they were celebrating and enjoying God-given beauty and goodness of life, their adversaries accused them of hedonism and indulgence in physical pleasures. The interpretation of the poem on the Rose did not seem to make much difference.

Kostandin had to write a third poem titled "Another Answer in Return," as a more forceful and philosophical response to an unnamed "elder brother," who may have been Yovhannēs. He described the dilemma which brotherhood culture faced in general⁴⁴:

You gave sincere advice and Kostandin listened willingly
And said in response, I understand. Now this is my reply:

Do not scold me in public for my deeds,
Do not put a heavy burden on me, for I am frail.

My soul is too keen to hear words of wisdom,
But my body is pleasure loving, for it is the child of the world.
Like a candle I am consumed between two fires,
I stagger around unstable and trembling.

Made of four opposites [elements], my nature is suspended.
Fire draws me upward, and earth drags me downward,
As the little water [in me] puts down the flames of my soul,
The wind [in me] starts my fire anew.

Servant of two wills, I find it hard to please any,
I seek to shelter the fire in my bosom and remain unharmed,
I long to cross the sea lightly on foot,
I wish to halt the racing winds with my hands.

I have often given myself advice and blamed [myself] for all these matters,
I have been the witness [of my fall] yet exposed myself as example to others,
But [still] I am not allowed to talk freely to a brother like you,
I must rather put my face down on the earth that you walk over.

Many tears I have shed and complained much,
He who looks at me with the spirit of true brotherhood,
Will know that I have been assaulted and tortured by many,
My heart is covered with wounds and embittered with suffering.

I have raised walls of sand and made myself a fortress,
But have invaded myself as a battlefield,
Yet I have no weapons and stand here bare and unarmed,
Hit on thousand sides but seeming unharmed.

Some call me the fool and the idiot that must be killed by poisoning,
Others think that my blood and that of my likes must be spilled,
I reply that Kostandin should not listen
And should not believe what they say or fall into despair.

As the reader immediately perceives, the poem is not an apology and Kostandin finds the accusations insignificant compared to the great spiritual battle that waged inwardly. He is very much aware of the implications of his poetry on the public level, and has genuine respect for this “elder brother.” Kostandin was in his late thirties and at the height of his poetic glory when Yovhannēs left Erzinka for Cilicia. At any rate, the contrast between their attitudes becomes explicit in the interpretation each gives to the classic idea that man is made of four “opposites.” The following is a hayrēn by Yovhannēs to be compared with Kostandin’s poem above:

You are a blend of four elements and a constitution weak at that.
How can air and earth be similar, while fire and water despise each other,
Created of opposites you are made to be a living man,
But when air, fire and water dissipate, your body will turn into dust.⁴⁵

In another poem, Yovhannēs commented with irony on the brothers’ parties on the green meadows and love-plays of nightingales and roses:

The world is a green meadow and we are like the young dove
That will get picked up by the angels gliding above like eagles,
O manuks, when you sit at the dinner table, invite your needy friends,
For in the other world, you will be given higher seats.⁴⁶

A. The Concept of Love and Christ: Synthesis of Kostandin and the Controversy

Yovhannēs constantly accused the manuks of adultery, love of women, wine, and parties. In a poem entitled “Extremely Beautiful and Precious Poem for the Benefit and Advice of Wise and Perfect Men,” he says that “wise men” or “sages” advise us to stay away from drinking, parties, and the company of women other than one’s wife. Alluding that women were nothing but cause for trouble and disease, he says that even Adam’s wife caused him so much grief. Strange women will only impoverish you and infect you. He concludes:

My brothers requested that I write these words.
I dedicate this poem with love to the Brotherhood,

The advices recorded here are useful words of wisdom,
To be remembered and turn them into seeds of goodness.⁴⁷

Obviously, for Yovhannēs, attachment to the sensible world is potentially evil and he identifies original sin with adultery. The five senses are the “doors of the city.” He says:

Close the doors of the senses and open those of the mind,
Do not allow the evil men to tempt your soul with sins, instead
Open the doors of wisdom and good deeds,
And fill yourself with the treasures of holy words.⁴⁸

The difference between the impermanence of the material world and the reality of the other is often the subject of his verses dedicated to the brotherhood. In his *hayrēns* (or poems of secular content), Yovhannēs makes an analogy between life and a journey into another world. Man is a traveler on this difficult path. The manuk should comprehend his predicament:

You know that you are a traveler, but you always go astray,
You claim loving the name [of the brotherhood], but you lack the
virtues of the manuk,
Your path is narrow and hard, but you stagger along with your eyes
shut,
Sweet is being a manuk, but your life is bitter and your conduct
uncomely.⁴⁹

Kostandin’s response to the above set of values and symbols is surprisingly complex. In an allegorical poem titled “The Coming of Spring as the Coming of Christ Told in a Parable,” he defines the spring as the time for planting seeds of goodness of a pure heart, and sees no conflict between the pantheistic celebration of spring and moral goodness. These seeds, he explains, “will bloom as sublime and praiseworthy fruits in this life.” As usual, he concludes the poem with the praise of the Holy Trinity,⁵⁰ just to remind the reader that he is not to be identified with the heterodox brothers in the city at the time. The recurrence of subject of the Trinity establishes the penetration of sects, like the Gorguians into the Brotherhoods of Erzinka. Similar to most sects, the latter too refused the Sacraments, religious hierarchy, and the doctrine of the Trinity in particular.

V. Yovhannēs and Yakob Manktawag: A Dantean Dialogue

The longest and perhaps the most important poem of Yovhannēs is a dialogue with Gorguian Yakob Manktawag. It is titled “Poem by Yovhannēs the Great Called Blooz Concerning the Problem of Yakob Manktawag Erznkac’i.” This is a truly Dantean drama in three acts, written in the same spirit and vision, complete with scenes, characters, and dialogue.⁵¹ There are no divisions in the text, but as we analyze its structure, we see that it was written as a play in verse around the theme of man’s deliverance. It has a plot, two protagonists, the elder brother Yovhannēs and Yakob, and a chorus. In the Nāṣirī tradition, didactic sermons and poems in similar structure and dialogue form were read and recited. The similarity between these verses for the samā’ sessions and the brotherhood poetry of both Yovhannēs and Kostandin is striking.

Being a dramatic composition, the poem may be divided into three acts. In Act I, the elder brother calls upon the sinner, Yakob (who is said to be thirty years old), to arouse him of his “immersion” into evil deeds and a sinful life. His condition is described and warnings are stated about the consequences. The elder brother calls upon the sinner to repent and purge himself of his sins: “Yakob, wake up from your slumber in sins,” is repeated at the end of the eighth quartet. Act I ends as follows:

Stare at the eternal flames
Remember your sins and weep
Your eyes filled with bitter tears.
Yakob, wake up from your slumber in sins.

In Act II, it is the penitent Yakob who speaks and asks the Lord to “relieve him of his countless evil deeds.” He confesses, repents, and begs God’s forgiveness. This confession on seven pages is almost identical to the classic text used in the Church for Confession and Holy Communion. After the sixteenth quartet, and starting from the seventeenth to the forty-second, the last line is a direct response to the initial call by the elder brother. Yakob now repeats, “Wake me up my Lord from the slumber in sins.” He cites his “evil deeds” as: intolerance and hatred toward the poor; refusal to assist them; negligence towards the Church and duties of the faithful; negligence of fasting and not helping the orphans and widows; unjustly criticizing others while himself committing most grave acts; lack of hospitality towards both guests and the

needy; refusing to assist the hungry and the thirsty; not clothing the bare or visiting the sick; wasting one's intelligence and talents; "running out of oil," similar to the five stupid maidens; defecting from the Lord's herd; being "the prodigal son," and so on. The first parts of this section are as follows⁵²:

My Lord compassionate and benevolent,
Free of revenge and just in heart,
With my humble heart, I beg you
To relieve me of my countless evil deeds.

I am the strayed lamb from your herd,
I am the price of your blood, not a stranger at all,
Be my healer and consolation,
Drive away the darkness and obscurity.

Marooned and deceived,
I drowned in the abyss of sins,
I neglected my transitory state,
And lost sight of the permanent.

Deceived by Satan,
I made myself matter for Hell
In my misery I failed to comprehend
And deprived myself of eternal life.

All powerful and all knowing God,
True and pure of all revenge,
I [now] believe in your true and holy order,
I submit to you, as primordial Reason.

...

Coming down from Jericho,
I fell into the hands of burglars,
I was beaten then abandoned,
Wake me up Lord of the slumber of sins.

In Act III, the penitent is on the path to deliverance by the "good Samaritan." He regains some confidence and hope, and raises hymns of glory to the Lord and the Holy Trinity. Several poems are written in

the same spirit but this poem is unique in brotherhood literature not only in its form and content, but also for the implied historic information that it suggests.

Since no other record exists about the Brotherhoods of Erznka, anarchy may have continued in more or less the same ways even after the proclamation of the official Constitution of the reformed brotherhood in the city. Toward the end of his career in the brotherhood, even Kostandin was weary of the conduct of his colleagues, some of whom were not even “believers” he said. In a poem entitled “Concerning the Brotherhood, and Good and Evil,” he advised a brother to “keep the gates of evil sealed” but the latter completely misunderstood. “I offered him priceless gems, but he took them as stones and hurled them back at me,” says Kostandin. He continues:

He refuses to take advice, for his mind is with the market gangs,
He is companion of the ignorant, the immature and the *murtadd*
[renegade]
Without discriminating the good and evil, he enjoys the company
of those
Whose words are sweet as sugar but who are murderous at heart.⁵³

VI. The Later Kostandin

The last poems of Kostandin reflect deep disillusionment and despair. Living among “false brothers” and in utter solitude, he felt thrown into a “sea of darkness,” as he said in “Words Said at the Hour of Sadness, When Hurt by False Brothers.”⁵⁴ In a poem dedicated to a brother “close” to him, Baron Amir or Polin K’alaymach, he spoke of conflicts and schism in the organization. It seems that Polin and Kostandin left the brotherhood; the latter withdrew to a monastery and the former went to Tabriz (where he is said to have copied the poems of Kostandin).⁵⁵ Kostandin dedicated a poem to Amir Polin, titled “Word from Kostandin to our Spiritual Brother Amir, from Soul to Soul and Heart to Heart.” The world is full of foul-speaking evil characters, he said, who will call the light dark, and the pure gold of the *Maghrib* (a reference in Arabic to North Africa-Morocco) fake. However, neither the test-stone nor fire scare “pure gold.” “He in whose heart light has dawned, will not host the darkness in him, only he who is blind has no knowledge of the light.” Recovering his spirit, he continued:

Why worry and feel confused and miserable,
Who can find a ship stable on the stormy sea,
Hold on to your wisdom to recover your peace,
And let people say that you are mad and lacking intelligence.

In “Word about Evil Companions Who Follow Seductions and Contradict the Good,” Kostandin complained of bad leadership. “We are as at a stormy sea with no ship and captain,” he said bluntly. The elders, who are supposed to lead the novices, act as the “blind leading the blind.” He then asked himself, “Why do you torture yourself out day and night?” “Do not stay at this sea [of corruption and turmoil] or else you will never reach the shore.”⁵⁶ A childhood vision Kostandin had at age fifteen of “sun-dressed Christ on the throne” was the theme of one of his later poems. He was humbled but still living the ecstasy of this mystical experience of divine love that happened in his adolescence, as he claimed. He saw himself as a chosen elect and servant of the Divine. He said that he understood the admiration as well as the jealousy of his entourage towards his poetic genius, which was a “divine gift” bestowed upon him by Christ, who actually came to him in the vision.⁵⁷

Kostandin’s last three poems are mystical and didactic. In one of them he wrote, “He is only wise who opens the eyes of his soul,”⁵⁸ and “the wisest man is a fool compared to God’s wisdom.” The world, he said, was transitory and virtues were simply means to deserve the permanent.⁵⁹ “Vain is the greatness of this world,” “because we all have inherited death.” In the style of Yovhannēs and surely Ibn al-Mī‘mār and al-Suhrawardī, an old and tired man, Kostandin invited the brothers to “wake up for the other world.”⁶⁰ In “Beneficial Advice to the Common Brothers,” he says pure conduct is the essence of the brotherhood.⁶¹ In the last poem entitled “Concerning Language and Judging a Friend,” he wrote:

You have to be patient, O Kostandin, he who insulted you
Is a fake and unjust man who hurt you with evil words.
If you are a free son of the Father of Christ and the Holy Spirit,
You will have to be meek and humble, as the Lord wanted you
to be.⁶²

Kostandin’s later works focus on religious even ascetic ethics. In a sense, he seems to have converted to the spiritual Brotherhood or

Futuwwa of al-Nāṣir and Yovhannēs. “The true initiate to the *futuwwa* was a seeker of God,”⁶³ for both. Caliph al-Nāṣir and his writers invested precisely on this point to reclaim the right of the caliphate to be the guardian of religious law. According to some Armenists, the change in style was due to political circumstances. At any rate, Kostandin withdrew to a monastery and died around 1330.

Notes

1. See Jawād, Introduction to *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 14; Al-Iṣfahānī, Abū’l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī ‘Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn. *Aghānī al-Aghānī—Mukhtaṣar Aghānī al-Iṣfahānī* [Precis of Songs/Poems from al-Iṣfahānī’s *Songs/Poems*]. Edited by Y. ‘Aoun al-‘Alayli. (Beirut: Mu’assasat Badrān, 1975), 345–47.
2. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 347; Jawād, Introduction, 14–15.
3. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 325.
4. Jawād, Introduction, 25.
5. Ibid., 16.
6. Ibid., 16–17.
7. Al-Tawḥīdī, 165; Jawād, Introduction, 22–23.
8. Jawād, Introduction, 21–22. The poem: al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, vol. I, 219–20; *Aghānī al-Aghānī*, *Mukhtaṣar*, 325.
9. See Kostandin Erzncac’i, *Taṭer* [Poems], ed. A. Srapean (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1962). Henceforth Kostandin.
10. Matt’ēos Juḷayec’i, Mat. Ms. #1402, fol. 232a.
11. Xač’ikean, “Matt’ēos Juḷayec’u,” 81–82. The source is M. Juḷayec’i, *Works of Apostles*, [K’nnut’iwn. . .], Mat. Ms. 1402, fol. 232a.
12. “Sermon of anger. . .” [K’aroz C’asman, I Bann ter Astwac mer, tur mez. . .], Ms # 2229, fol. 251b. Also see *Knnut’iwn Gorcoc’ Arak’eloc’* [Study of the Works of the Apostles], Mat. Ms # 1402, fol. 173a.
13. Matt’ēos Juḷayec’i, Mat. Ms. #6607, fol. 52.
14. Kirakos Ganjakec’i, *Patmut’iwn*, 120.
15. Kostandin, 181.
16. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 180.
17. Ibid., 292.
18. Kostandin, 184–86.
19. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 175.
20. Ibid., 203–204.
21. Ibid., 195–98.
22. K’urtean, *Eriza*, vol. I, 272.
23. Kostandin, 28, the poem: 172–82.
24. Srapean, Introduction to *Kostandin*, 28.
25. Yovhannisean, “Hraparakumner,” 190–91.
26. See Mxit’ar Aparanec’i, “Aḷandavork’ Hayk” [Sectarian Armenians]—IX–XV centuries” in Ghevont Alishan, *Hayapatum* (Venice: St. Lazar, 1901), 552; Srapean, Introduction to Kostandin, 27.
27. Grigor Daranaḷec’i, *Žamanakagrut’iwn* [Chronicle] (Jerusalem: Surb Yakob, 1915), 510.
28. Mxit’ar Aparanec’i, “Aḷandavork’ Hayk,” 552.

29. Grigor Daranalec'i, *Chronicle*, 510.
30. T'orkom Kushagian, *C'uc'ak Hayerēn Ĵeragrac' Surb Nšani Vanuc' i Sebastia* [List of the Armenian manuscripts of the Monastery of St. Nšan in Sivās], *Handēs Amsoreay* 11–12 (1924), 514.
31. Mxit'ar Aparanec'i, "Alandavork' Hayk," 552.
32. Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 291–92.
33. Ibn al-Tūṣī, Epistle written for the *samā'* of the Brothers of Erzinka, Aya Sofia Ms. # 2049, fols. 241–45, fol. 242a.
34. Kostandin, "*Tať Garnan ew Uraxut'ean*" [Poem of Spring and Joy], 153–57.
35. The *sałi* or *sāqī* in Arabic, is the server of refreshments and wine.
36. *Morj* is slim, fresh tree branch, a metaphor for young girls. *Chashta* is a string instrument of six strings.
37. Ibid., lines 29–56, 155–57.
38. Ibid., "*Tať Siroy*" [Song of Love], 163–65.
39. *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, 275–77.
40. Ibid., 278–79.
41. Kostandin, "*Tať Garnan Azniw*," [Song to the Gentle Spring], 134–36.
42. Ibid., "*Bank' Vardi Orinakaw zK'ristos Patmē*" [Poem about Christ through the Example of the Rose], 137–44.
43. Ibid., "*Meknut'iwn Vardin Hamarot-Vasn Angitac' Shinec'i, zi karcein et'ē marmnaw ēr Bank' Vardis, es vasn ayn grec'i*" [Brief Interpretation of the poem of the Rose, for the ignorant who believed that I wrote the Rose for Physical Love], 145–49.
44. Kostandin, "*Krkneal Patasxani Ayspēs I Dēm*" [Another Answer in Return], 181–83.
45. Yovhannēs, *Hayrēn* # 5, in: *Pank' Čapaw* [Poems], 28.
46. Ibid., *Hayrēn* # 55, 37.
47. Ibid., "*Tať Oskešah Xist Gelec'ik Yogut ew i Xrat Imastnoc' ew Katareloc'*" [Extremely Beautiful and Precious Poem for the Benefit and Advice of Wise and Perfect men], 70–73.
48. Ibid., "*Yovhannu Vartapeti Eznkayec'woy Makanun Bluz Koč'ec'eal Asac'eal Ban Šahawet ew Ogtakar*" [Useful and Beneficial Words by Yovhannēs Vardapet Called Bluz], *Bank' Č'apaw*, 73–78.
49. Ibid., *Hayrēn* # 5, 25.
50. Kostandin, "*Ays Garuns zGalustn K'ristosi Patmē A'akōk*," [The Coming of Spring as the Coming of Christ Told in a Parable], 150–52.
51. Ibid., "*Yovhannu Meci Makanun Bluz Asac'eal i Xndroy Yokobay Manktawagi Eznkayec'woy*" [Poem by Yovhannēs the Great Called Bluz Concerning the Problem of Yakob Manktawag of Erznkac'i], 50–58.
52. Ibid., 51–56.
53. Kostandin, "*Yatags Elbayrut'ean Barwo ew Č'ari* [Concerning the Brotherhood, its Good and Evil], 184–86.
54. Ibid., "*Bank' Xosil i Jam Trtmuť'ean zor Grec'i ar Pahs Sut Elbarc', zor Viravorec'ay*" [Words Said at the Hour of Sadness when Hurt by False Brothers], 192–94.
55. Ibid., "*Ban Kostantea ar mer Hogewor Elbayr Amir, Hogow i Hogi ew Srtē i Sirt*" [Word from Kostandin to our Spiritual Brother Amir, from Soul

to Soul and Heart to Heart], 195–198. For further details see Xaç'ikean, “The Constitution,” 84. Baron Amir's collection of Kostandin's poems in the year 1336 is in the Mxit'arist Library, Venice, Ms #103, fols. 3–181. The manuscript, which also includes a copy of *Sahman ew Kanonk'* has a very important colophon by Polin. Also see Kurtean, *Eriza*, 155.

56. Kostandin, “*Pan Yałags Č'ar Ėnkerac' ew Patrast Kal Molorec'uc'ič' Omanc' vork' Hakarakin Barut' ean*” [Word about evil companions who follow seductions and opposed to goodness], 199–203.
57. Kostandin, “*Omank' Č'araxosen*” [Some Speak Ill of me], 187–191.
58. Ibid., “*Norin Kostandey Bank' ”* [Words by Kostandin], 204–206, 204.
59. Ibid., 204–206.
60. Ibid., “*Bank' Yałags Anc'awor Mecut'ean, zi Mahwan Žarangen Erkawork'sew unayn Vayelč'ut'iwn Ašxarhis*”, [Poem on the Finite Glories, for we will Inherit Death and Vain are the Luxuries of the World], 209–12.
61. Ibid., “*Xrat Hasarakac' Pitani ew Ogtakar*” [Useful and beneficial advice to the secular brothers], 207–208.
62. Ibid., “*Ban Yałags Lezwi ew Č'datel zĖnkers or ė ays*” [Word Concerning Language and not Judging a Friend], 213–15, 214.
63. “*Bāb al-Samā'*,” Aya Sofia, Ms #2049, fol. 219a.

Part Two
The Prophet and Islam in
Armenian Literature—
Seventh to Fourteenth
Centuries: Armenian
Conceptualization of
Islam through Polemics—
Apologetics

Life and Teachings of Prophet Muḥammad

I. Early Life of the Prophet—The Migration (*al-Hijrah*) and the Medinan Period

This chapter is in fact a very extensive footnote to Part II. It provides the reader with a very schematic background about Islam and the Prophet, as a framework for subsequent discussions and a reference for comparison with Armenian perceptions of it and its founder. The beginnings of Islam should be seen in the tribal and economic circumstances of western Arabia at the time. To the seventh century and during most of it, the tribal structure superseded the role of pagan religion. The economy almost totally depended on the north-south trade and few tribes monopolized the trade and resources. Conflict was very common and disputes were settled often violently by tribal laws. Mecca, Muḥammad's hometown, depended on trade and imports and controlled the north-south route. In addition to its economic status, Mecca was also the site of the ancient pagan sanctuary or the *ḥaram* (the present *Ka'bah*), which became a meeting place for the clans. During the early 500s, the descendants of the Qurayy or the Quraysh—Muḥammad's tribe—became the guardians of the sanctuary.¹ Other tribes controlled other pagan sites, but the Quraysh made Mecca “the center of what has been described as the Meccan Commonwealth, a commercial and diplomatic network” in control of trade between al-Shām and the Yemen. When circumstances allowed, the *ḥaram* received pilgrims and by the seventh century Mecca was the most significant urban center in western Arabia.²

Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdallāh Ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib Ibn Hāshim (or Muḥammad) was born probably in the Year of the Elephant. According to M. Watt, there was an elephant (or several) in the Abyssinian army that overran the Yemen and reached Mecca in 568. The invaders were

driven back around the year 570. Muḥammad must have been born in 568 and not in 570, as it is commonly held.³ His father died before he was born, and as it was customary, his mother sent him to the desert to a wet nurse called Amīnah. Back in Mecca, the head of the Hāshim clan, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, was naturally the guardian of his grandson. At six, his mother died and he spent the next two years with his grandfather. After the latter’s death, his uncle Abū Ṭālib, the new head of the Hāshims, adopted him.

Not much is known about the early life of Muḥammad until 590. According to the story, at some point in his adolescence, by his insistence, his uncle Abū Ṭālib took him in his caravan to the north. According to most versions of the Christian accounts of Muḥammad and the Baḥīra legend, he allegedly learned about Christianity as well as Judaism from the Arian monk Sergius Baḥīra or Bkhīra. In many narratives, Muḥammad met the monk Baḥīra not at Buṣrah in south Syria, as his biographer Ibn Ishāq (704–768/85–151H) tells, but at Sinai in Egypt. Ibn Ishāq relates that the meeting happened during Muḥammad’s first visit to Syria when as a boy he was in the party of his uncle Abū Ṭālib:

When the caravan reached Buṣrah in Syria, there was a monk [who lived] in his cell by the name of Baḥīrā, who was well versed in the knowledge of [the religion of] Christians. The monk had always occupied that cell. There he gained his knowledge from a book that was in the cell, so they allege, handed on from generation to generation. They [Abū Ṭālib’s party] had often passed by him previously and he never spoke to them or took any notice of them until this year [?] and when they stopped near his cell he made a great feast for them.

Baḥīrā noticed that there was a cloud hanging over the head of the boy and insisted that he should join his guests. He then personally checked the “seal of prophethood” on him. This was a sign on Muḥammad’s back between his shoulders, as “described in Christian books.”⁴ He told Abū Ṭālib that a great future lay before the child and that he should take care of him and guard him particularly from the Jews.⁵ No other reference is made about any teachings of the Bible or other scriptures by this monk to Muḥammad. Otherwise, he must have been a clever young Meccan, and like his co-citizens, he was known for his restraint and foresight. But as a merchant, he was of the less prosperous among the Quraysh. He was in the service of Khadijah, the widow of a merchant from the Quraysh of Mecca, and at age twenty-five

he married her. She was married twice before and was over ten years his elder. She bore him six children, four girls and two boys, the latter died in infancy.⁶ Khadijah's modest capital gave Muḥammad some access to the world of commerce, but otherwise, the period from 595 to 610 is obscure. Moreover, it seems that a family and children gave him some stability and financial security. His business, however, was not significant enough to allow him a place in the higher circle of the governing merchant class of Mecca.⁷

Ibn Ishāq relates that Muḥammad was an extraordinary man. Maysara, a servant of Khadijah, was said to have noticed that while Muḥammad traveled on his camel, two angels shaded him from the sun. When Khadijah told the story to her learned Christian cousin Waraqa Ibn Naufal Ibn Asad Ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza—who "had studied the scriptures"—the latter said,

If this is true . . . verily Muḥammad is the prophet of this people. I knew that a prophet of this people was to be expected, his time has come.⁸

Around the year 610, in his early forties, Muḥammad reported receiving revelations of the Qur'ān and a year later he was already preaching. His wife and his cousin 'Alī were the first converts.⁹ For a while he remained in Mecca with few followers, but the Quraysh was not only indifferent but also hostile to his teachings. In 619, Muḥammad lost his wife and uncle, the two people closest to him; he was also alienated from his own tribe and the people of his native town Mecca, as well as from the city of Ṭā'if nearby.¹⁰

A. The Migration or al-Hijrah—Muḥammad at Medīnah

To the year 621, Muḥammad was in virtual isolation until he met with the elders of the town/oasis of Yathrib or Medīnah at al-'Aqabah on the Red Sea. About 250 miles north of Mecca, Yathrib had eleven main clans, three of whom were Jewish: the Banū al-Naḍir, the Banū Qurayẓah, and the Banū Qaynuqā'. The main Arab tribes were the rival Aus and Khazraj.¹¹ The Medīnans were primarily agrarian people; the city also had some crafts, but the scarcity of water and the growing population caused disputes and perpetual conflict. Muḥammad seems to have been invited as an arbiter and to restore some order. The elders of the tribes pledged to obey him and this initial agreement came to be known as the First Pledge of al-'Aqabah. By June 622, a group of around seventy-five followers or Muslims pledged to follow God and

His Messenger, to avoid sins, and to fight for the cause of Islam. This was the Second Pledge of al-ʿAqabah.¹² Muḥammad and these first Muslims, better known as the migrants or *al-muhājirūn*, slowly moved into Medīnah in small groups. He arrived in Medīnah with Abū Bakr, a merchant from the Quraysh on September 24, 622, and the *Hijrah* calendar started at this date.¹³

The *Hijrah* or the migration to Medīnah freed Muḥammad and his followers from the pressure of the pagan and arrogant Meccans and put them in a friendlier environment. To consolidate his position at Medīnah, Muḥammad tried to create blood ties between the new settlers (*muhājirūn*) and his supporters or the *anṣār*. After establishing himself in Medīnah, the non-Muslim Arabs and the Jews of the city were not allowed to enter into alliances with the enemies of the Muslims, such as the Meccans at this time.¹⁴

II. The Constitution of Medīnah

The most important document of Muḥammad's Medinan period is the group of treatises known collectively as the Constitution of Medīnah written in 622 and preserved in two versions. There is a fuller text in Ibn Ishāq's Biography or *Sīrah* and an abbreviated version in Abū ʿUbaydah's *Kitāb al-Amwāl*. Often simply called the Eight Documents (as lumped together in the *Sīrah*), the Constitution is generally taken as an authentic document written by ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, who functioned as the assistant and secretary of the Prophet. The following is the passage in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīrah*, with some omissions:

The Apostle wrote a document concerning the emigrants [*muhājirūn*] and the helpers [*anṣār*] in which he made a friendly agreement with the Jews and established them in their religion, and their property, and stated the reciprocal obligations, as follows: "In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful. This is a document from Muḥammad the prophet [governing the relations] between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them. They are one community [*Ummah*] to the exclusion of all men. The Quraysh emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit [a fine or amercement paid as a compensation for the shedding of blood] within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers [Ibn Ishāq cites specific terms for specific tribes and clans]. . . . A believer shall not slay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever, nor shall he assist an unbeliever against a believer. . . . Believers are friends one to the other to the exclusion of outsiders. To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. He shall not be

wronged nor his enemies be aided. The peace of believers is indivisible. . . . The believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of God. . . . Whosoever is convicted of killing a believer without good reason shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied [with blood money]. . . . The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers. The Jews of Banū 'Auf are one community with the believers [the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs], their freedom and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt themselves and their families [other Jewish tribes too are mentioned in this context]. . . . Loyalty is a protection against treachery. . . . The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. . . . The Jews must pay the believers as long as the war lasts. Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document. A stranger under protection shall be as his host doing no harm and committing no crime. A woman shall only be given protection with the consent of her family. If any dispute or controversy likely to cause should arise it must be referred to God and to the Apostle of God. . . . Quraysh and their helpers shall not be given protection . . . the Jews of al-Aus, their freedmen and themselves have the same standing with the people of this document in pure loyalty from the people of this document. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. God approves of this document. This deed will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home in the city, is safe unless he has been unjust and sinned. God is the protector of the good and God-fearing man and Muḥammad is the Apostle of God."¹⁵

In the early Medinan Islamic community, or the *Ummah*, and as agreed, arbitration between rivals belonged to God, on whose behalf Muḥammad His Messenger dealt with these problems with absolute power invested upon him by God. Tribal revenge was outlawed and loyalty to God and His Messenger became the rule.¹⁶ The new faith implied a highly concentrated structure, with God as the highest authority working through His Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad. It cancelled the tribal structure and norms and it is not difficult to see why the Meccans resented Muḥammad. Had Muḥammad stayed out of their affairs, his mission would have been a local phenomenon. But conflict was inevitable and it started as of 624/2H, on the trade route which passed by Medinah. Clashes between Meccans and Medinans were not too serious or violent, but when Muḥammad won the first battle of Badr, he felt strong enough to blockade the trade route and run against the Jews who had refused to convert.

The initial oath to the Jews was set aside. Muḥammad was said to have liquidated most of the Banū Qaynuqā', the silversmiths.¹⁷ Other tribes migrated; accounts and opinions vary on these circumstances. A new Meccan offensive was organized in the spring of 625/3H, and the invaders took position at Uḥud near Medīnah, but many stayed neutral. The Meccans led by Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd—the famous commander of Islamic armies later on—drove the Medīnans away. In his new base town, Medīnah, Muḥammad continued to persecute the Jews and the next clan was the Banū al-Naḍīr. The latter moved to Khaybar and joined other Jews there.¹⁸

III. The Last Years at Medīnah 627/5H—632/11H

The trade route through Mecca was now under Muḥammad's control and he maintained the blockade. When in 627/5H, the Meccans put a siege on Medīnah in retaliation, Muḥammad ordered a trench (*khandaq*) be dug around the town to keep the Meccans out, who did not seem to be eager to fight anyway. Having cleared the area of all non-Muslims and driven the Meccans away, Muḥammad was in full control of Medīnah and initiated contacts with his hometown to end hostilities by diplomacy. In a parallel fashion, he contacted local Christians and was said to have sent messages to the monarchs of Byzantium, Persia, Abyssinia, and others.

In the spring of 628/6H, Muḥammad led a peaceful pilgrimage to Mecca, to which Muslim prayer was now to be directed, and not to Jerusalem, as it was previously. Truce was made for the next ten years and the number of Meccan converts rose. Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd and 'Amr Ibn al-Āṣ were among the most prominent. In 630/9H, Muḥammad led ten thousand people into Mecca. The *ḥaram* was cleansed of idols but the *Ka'bah* was kept as the focus of Muslim worship. Three weeks later, on January 630, the Prophet drove away a major offensive by a number of tribes at Ḥunayn. Tā'if was taken next and the idols of the temple were destroyed. Until his death in 632/11H, Muḥammad consolidated and expanded his influence by propaganda and diplomacy.¹⁹ During the months of October and November 630/9H, he sent a large expedition to Tabūk near the Gulf of al-'Aqabah. The tribes along the road were mostly Christian, associated with the Byzantine Empire.²⁰ At the time, he must have heard of the restoration of the so-called Holy Road to Jerusalem by Emperor Heraclius in March of 630, and probably wanted to present himself and Islam as better alternatives in power and prestige.²¹ He foresaw the growth of the sphere of Islam and

already regarded Byzantium as a rival power,²² and made oaths/pacts with non-Muslims. In all cases, the terms of all these Medinan oaths were more or less fixed: the Muslims guaranteed their non-Muslim subjects the *dhimmīs* protection and freedom of worship in return for a payment of tribute and total subjugation. No collaboration with the enemies of Islam was allowed and in such cases the *dhimmīs* would be breakers of the pact and treated as enemies. Pacts in this spirit were indeed concluded by Khālid Ibn al-Walid and other military figures of the early and later invasions.

In March of 632/11H, still residing in Medīnah, Muḥammad made a last pilgrimage or *ḥajj* to Mecca. The visit established the rites and rules of pilgrimage, one of the pillars of Islam, but this rite also incorporated many of the pre-Islamic traditions. After his return to Medīnah, his health declined and he stopped visiting his wives, each a night (despite serious conflict and divorces with some). During his last days, the ailing Prophet spent his time at the house of his favorite wife ‘Ā’ishā, the daughter of Abū Bakr, who now led the prayers. On Monday June 8, 632/Rabī’ al-Awwal 14, 11H, the Prophet died with his head in ‘Ā’ishā’s lap.²³

At his death, Muḥammad was regarded as a religious and political leader and reformer. He also established himself as the Messenger of God, as proclaimed to him in a vision by a glorious being or Gabriel at the earliest stages of the revelations around the year 610.²⁴ But throughout, he continued to receive revelations at frequent intervals. His close companions memorized them, and wrote them down, probably already during his lifetime. Legend says that after his death, verses were found written on “paper, stones, palm-leaves, shoulder-blades, ribs and bits of leather.” According to Watt, Muḥammad himself had given the *surahs*, or the books of the Qur’ān, their present form, but the final editing and arrangement were said to have been made during the twenty years following his death. In form at least, the Qur’ān is said to be the “word of God.” God is the speaker and uses the “We” of majesty.²⁵

IV. The Message of Islam

Watt classifies the main themes of Islam under five headings:

1. God’s goodness and power—This was a concept directed against “the materialism of the Meccan merchants” whose wealth empowered them socially and politically.

2. The return to God for judgment—Fear of the Last Judgment was definitely a motive and meant to de-tribalize justice.
3. Man's response in gratitude and worship—This was not simply an inner experience, but first and foremost a public affirmation of submission or Islām.
4. Man's response to God—This embodied generosity toward the community.
5. Muḥammad's vocation as central to the message of Islam next to God's unity.²⁶

The influence of Judaism and Christianity on Islam has been discussed and described in a great variety of manners. Surely, Islam stood within the tradition of Judeo-Christian monotheism with its conceptions of God, creation, revelation, resurrection, and judgment. The later passages of the Qur'ān contain more material from both Testaments and this explains the reason why Muḥammad started preaching around the year 610 only.²⁷ The non-Muslim reader of the Qur'ān realizes that the quoted references do not reveal direct familiarity with the Bible. As a merchant and a clever person, however, he had opportunity to converse with people from all faiths in Mecca, Syria, and Medinah. He also had talks with Waraqa, Khadijah's learned Christian cousin.²⁸

Two factors contributed to the advent and proliferation of Islam: the cosmopolitan atmosphere in the urban centers of Arabia along the north-south trade route and the breakdown of the tribal system and internal solidarity. Undoubtedly, Muḥammad was a reformist, an individualist as well as a genuine populist. He challenged the social order and norms based on tribal hierarchy and wealth. The Qur'ān precisely rejected the priority and rule of the powerful and wealthy, and suggested an alternative system to correct tribal customs, such as the rule of revenge. According to Qur'ānic teachings, pride in wealth is a sin; instead, humility before God and generosity toward the poor and the protection of the weak are requirements.²⁹

Early Meccan opposition to the teachings of Muḥammad arose because of this challenge from a man of relatively modest background and means. His leadership had no basis in the existing system, which indeed rejected him and he had to leave Mecca. Only his own family and close friend Abū Bakr (two years his junior) converted and stood by him at this early stage. After the death of his protector and uncle Abū Ṭālib in 619, the next chief of the clan of Hāshim, his other uncle Abū Lahab, did not accept Islam and in fact opposed him.³⁰

V. Formation of the Early Islamic Community or the *Ummah*

The term *Ummah* began to appear in Muḥammad's early messages when the Quraysh rejected his mission. It referred to all those who accepted his message as Messenger of God or Prophet. After the *Hijrah* to Medinah, all subsequent activity came in the context of the opposition between loyal believers and their adversaries, the unbelievers. The early *Ummah* or the first Muslim community at Medinah has great significance as the formative and foundational phase of Islam. It was still tribal to a degree, but under the banner of Islam, it was essentially revolutionary in many respects. The world of Islam was now the entire world and no other faiths or deities could be regarded equal or superior to it. As God's Messenger, or *Rasūl Allāh*, Muḥammad had absolute jurisdiction and power, and the new ruling elite was urban and non-tribal. All Muslims were encouraged to integrate themselves in the religious-political structure of the *Ummah*. Against this background, the Islamic campaigns in all directions were part of the mission of the Prophet and the message of the Qur'ān. Naturally, they had to continue and expand, as they did.

Already in this early phase and as we see in the Constitution of Medinah, says Spuler, Muḥammad displayed a "statesmanlike ability," which he developed during the following years.³¹ His successes in subjecting the people of Medinah, at the battles of Badr and Khandaq, were taken as the victory of the *Ummah* of Muslims over the unbelievers. As the military and financial position of Muḥammad improved, the term *Ummah* receded and instead *Jamā'ah* (party of supporters) and *Ḥizb Allāh* (God's party) appeared, implying the assembly of God's partisans. But the *Ummah* was an established concept and all activity was carried out in the name of God, through his Messenger.³² By 632, Muḥammad had managed to convert much less than half the population of Arabia, but he had unified the Arabs through Islam. This was a religion distinct from that of the Persians, Byzantines, Abyssinians, and Jews, and promised peace, prosperity, and protection to all. The greatest achievement of Muḥammad was his success in creating a new way of life and system of values. More importantly, the religious-political structure of Islam became the basis for empires and it survived and flourished strongly to this day.

Notes

1. Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 25.
2. Ibid., 27.

3. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 7.
4. Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muḥammad*—A translation of Ishāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. A. Guillaume (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78–80.
5. Ibid., 81.
6. Ibid., 11.
7. Ibid., 12.
8. Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 83.
9. Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 30–31.
10. Ibid., 32.
11. Watt, *Muḥammad Prophet*, 83–84.
12. Ibid., *Prophet*, 83.
13. Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 33.
14. Bertold Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs*, vol. I, trans. F. R. Bagley, (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), 8.
15. Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 231–33.
16. Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 33–34.
17. Ibid., 36–37.
18. Ibid., 38.
19. Ibid., 42–43.
20. Watt, *Muḥammad Prophet*, 218.
21. Ibid., 219.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 227–28.
24. Ibid., 15.
25. Ibid., 16.
26. Ibid., 27–30.
27. Ibid., 39.
28. Ibid., 40.
29. Ibid., 52–54.
30. See Ibid., 74–82.
31. Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs*, 9.
32. Watt, *Muḥammad Prophet*, 213.

Islam and the Tradition of Arab-Christian Apologetic/Polemical Literature

I. Islam and Muslim Apologetic/Polemical Literature

By the end of the seventh century and less than seventy years after Muḥammad's death, Islam was already the "dominant religious-political force" in the medieval Near East.¹ In order to establish the legitimacy of their rule over non-Muslims and from the early periods of their expansion, the Muslims set out to prove the distinctiveness and superiority of Islam. On their part, Arab and other Christians responded by apologetic/polemical texts as of the first century of Islam. Centuries later, in the West, this literature became a reference and served as basis for the polemicists. The superiority of the Qur'ān as the final and direct Word of God was a fact for the Muslims, who took the successes of Islam as proofs of its veracity and legitimate dominance over Jews and Christians. The latter were now the protected subjects or the *dhimmīs* of Muslims. The "strongest and earliest argument" for the supremacy of Islam, as Tolan puts it, was the Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem. It was built in 690s by Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik. The first monument of Muslim architecture, this mosque was built on the site of the second Jerusalem temple, which was destroyed by Roman armies in AD 70. In rebuilding on a site traditionally associated with the ancient kings Solomon and David, the Umayyad caliphs wanted to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of all their subjects. The inscription running along the exterior of the monument proclaims the unity of God and the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad in verses from the Qur'ān. In contrast, the inscription on the interior contains the Christological verses from the Qur'ān. They emphasized the role of Jesus as a human prophet,

for God could not have a son. Accordingly, the Muslims were the true heirs to Jesus.²

In the Qur'ān and at many occasions, the Prophet provided the guidelines to define the spiritual and political status of Islam in relation to Christianity and Judaism. In many respects, Muslim apologetic and polemical strategies were drawn by the Prophet himself and surely from the Qur'ān. The Christians simply developed their arguments in reaction to these strategies and themes, and in this context defined their faith as well as polemical strategies. This is the reason why, apart from the Biblical-apocalyptic and heretical contexts, Christian polemicists focused on the legalism and the moral teachings of Islam. The assault on the person of the Prophet was a parallel strategy adopted by almost all Christian polemicists both in the East and in the West.

On the doctrinal level, and in brief, it must be remembered that for both sides and from the beginning it was clear that the Qur'ān accepted a number of Christian concepts. The virginal conception of Christ was one, but there was no connection between this miraculous act of God and the divinity of Christ. The Incarnation, or the human and divine hypostases in Christ, the cornerstone of Christian theology, was denied because it contradicted God's unity. Naturally, all Trinitarian doctrines were dismissed too. The Qur'ān, however, unequivocally established the prophethood of Christ. Like the other Biblical prophets, He was venerated as a pure and superior man, a lawgiver, sent to "Banū Isrā'īl" and was one of the posterity of Abraham. However, His death by crucifixion was just an episode made to seem to be so³ (hence the similarities between Christian Docetists and the Muslims). Comparisons between the personality and the so-called prophethood of Christ and those of Muḥammad were made in almost all the apologetic/polemical texts. The Muslims saw that like the Jews, the Christians too had gone astray, and more importantly, they had corrupted the true Abrahamic faith by omitting certain passages from Gospels. It seemed that the Christians had to convert to Islam almost naturally. Concerning conversions, even though the Qur'ān did not advise compulsory conversions, they became part of the *futūḥ* or the first Muslim campaigns.⁴ In this respect, the following verse is often quoted by both sides, each for polemical purposes of its own:

Fight against those, who [even though] being given the Scripture, do not believe in God, nor the Last day, and do not refrain from that which God hath forbidden by His Messenger, and do not follow the

Religion of Truth, until they pay the tribute (*jizyah*) readily, being brought low. (The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah 9: 29)

Violent encounters between Muslims and Christians in stories of saints and martyrs generated a separate genre of literature. Otherwise, defining the religious “other” was an intriguing and challenging task and polemics became part of Muslim politics, but literature made little if any difference on the ground. Since the Christians were the majority in the lands which the Muslims conquered, the latter had to establish the legitimacy of their rule, also by showing the superiority and the Biblical roots of Islam. They approached the non-Muslims with the absolute conviction that the Qur'ān was the ultimate and final word of God and all else was obsolete and unacceptable.⁵ According to S. Griffith, Islamic religious thought and ‘ilm al-kalām or systematic theology in particular developed during the first ‘Abbāsīd century. ‘Ilm al-kalām, he says,

... was the intellectual discipline devoted to the reasoned justification of the truths of the divine revelation and to the exploration of the implications of revealed truth for human thought in general ... it grew out of the early participation of Muslims in the styles of scholarly discussion Christian academics and intellectuals employed in the Greco-Syrian milieu of the Christian centers of learning in the oriental patriarchates.⁶

Gradually, ‘ilm al-kalām became a speculative science and the judge “not only of all religious discourse but also of all theoretical discourse, including that of *falsafah* [philosophy].”⁷ W. Z. Ḥaddād draws three phases or styles in Islamic polemical literature: an early phase during the seventh century or the Umayyad Period, another phase after consolidation of power in the eighth century, and a final one which followed the introduction of the Greek sciences in the ninth century.⁸ As of the early phases the Scriptures of both faiths were quoted. For example, in the case of the singularity of God as an axiomatic truth, the Muslims urged the Christians to take Christ not as “one of three,” but as a “messenger of God, a word conveyed to Mary and a spirit from God.” They brought in a familiar quote from the Qur'ān, Sūrah 4: 171: “Say not ‘three’—Cease [it is] better for you. Allah is one God. Far is it removed from his transcendent majesty that He should have a son.”⁹ By the eighth century, the Islamic Empire had taken shape and most people on these territories learned Arabic. Translations from classical

Greek texts into Arabic were made by non-Muslim scholars who were mostly clergy. These scholars read the Qur'ān first hand and some translated the Bible into Arabic. Discussions were always supported by direct references to both Scriptures.¹⁰

The third phase, according to Ḥaddād, followed the establishment of *Dār al-Ḥikmah* in Baghdad in 830 by 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813/198H–833/218H). A massive project of translations made many works of Classical and Hellenistic periods available, even though several were simply paraphrases and many were wrongly ascribed to few authoritative figures such as Plato and Aristotle. Texts on philosophy, medicine, alchemy, astronomy, astrology, and mathematics were translated.¹¹ Radical changes in style and outlook happened during this period. In order to prove their side of religious truths and disprove the others', and to formulate their arguments, polemicists began using Aristotelian logic and philosophy. God's unity, for example, was established by the tools of Aristotelian logic.

Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (d. ca. 866/252H–870/257H) was the first to use Aristotelian logic in order to refute the doctrine of Trinity. Since his book, *Refutation of the Christians*, was lost, his arguments were reconstructed through the work of his adversary, Jacobite Yaḥyā Ibn 'Ādī (893/280H–974/363H), a Monophysite (In Greek, *monos* means one, alone, and *physis* means nature. Monophysiticism is the Christological position that Christ has only one nature, and His humanity is absorbed by His deity, as opposed to the Chalcedonian position which holds that Christ maintains two natures: one divine and one human.). In order to validate the doctrine of Trinity, the latter in turn used the same type of logical argumentation that al-Kindī had used.¹²

One of the most prominent figures of Islamic polemical literature was Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013/403H). Al-Bāqillānī was a Mālikī judge in Baghdad and belonged to the Ash'arite school of theological interpretation. Considered a *mujaddid* (modernizer) and a very articulate polemicist in defense of *ahl al-sunnah* or orthodox Muslims, he was described as *sayf al-sunnah wā lisān al-ummah* (sword of the Sunnīs and tongue/voice of the Islamic nation). In his view, the Twelver Shī'īs too, who called him the Satan, were blasphemers (*kuffār*). Al-Bāqillānī used the word *radd* (response) for refutation in his five-volume work called *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*.¹³ In general, the question-response style was adopted by both Muslim and Christian polemicists-apologists, and the two terms,

question and response/answer, became technical terms. As shall be discussed in the next chapters, Grigor Tat'ewac'i and Matt'ëos Ĵulayec'i too followed the tradition of question-answer or *harc'um-patasxan* almost six centuries later.

Al-Bāqillānī's *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* is one of the most important texts in Islamic theology. He addressed naturalists, astrologers, dualists, Magians, Christians, Brahmanists, and Jews and showed quite accurate knowledge of the doctrines of the Melkites, Nestorians, Monophysites. "As an Ash'arite," says Ḥaddād, "al-Bāqillānī affirmed the importance of reasoned reflection to prove that the One, eternal and unique God, has objective, essential attributes, which were co-eternal. But unsure of the definition, he also said that these attributes were 'neither He (the essence of God) nor other than He.'" For this school, the seven attributes of God were life, knowledge, power, will, speech, vision, and hearing. Al-Bāqillānī added an eighth that was *baqā'* or permanence.¹⁴ Similar to all Muslim polemicists, he too rejected the Christian doctrine of Incarnation and all types of anthropomorphism, for these would place God in the temporal order. As an Ash'arite, he considered the Qur'ān to be God's uncreated speech, while the more liberal Mu'tazilites considered it His created speech.¹⁵

In addition to his defense of absolute monotheism, al-Bāqillānī also focused on the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the doctrine of Incarnation, the practice of explaining the three hypostases (*aqānīm*) through the three attributes of goodness, wisdom, and power (*ĵūd, hikmah, ḥawl*).¹⁶ Always using Biblical quotes, he observed that since God has other attributes too, there would be no problem in using them, but we would then end up with a multiplicity of persons. The humanity of all the prophets, including Jesus, is another theme in his refutation of Incarnation.¹⁷

II. Christian Apologetic/Polemical Traditions East and West—Seventh–Fourteenth Centuries

A. Circumstances and Contexts

Until the advent of Islam, and for many centuries afterwards, the definition and maintenance of orthodoxy in a regional context were the main concerns of the Eastern churches. While Armenians and Syrians struggled to maintain the independence of their churches, Byzantium never abandoned hopes and aggression to assimilate the non-Chalcedonians. Theoretically, orthodoxy meant the acceptance of the creedal

formulations of the universal councils,¹⁸ but throughout, the concept remained controversial and was inevitably politicized as of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Platonic dualism lay in the background of both the definitions and disputes around Christ's nature. This dualism took the body as an instrument, and the rational soul as the essence, the real person, and the moral agent. Pythagorean, Platonic, and Neoplatonic philosophies, as well as Zoroastrian doctrines, were absorbed in the syncretism of the early Christian trends, and extreme types of dualism developed in the entire region. Naturally, Christological and Trinitarian doctrines were directly affected and disputes followed.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 395) played a very significant and lasting role in defining the Trinitarian doctrine of the Council of Constantinople (381). Simplified, it is as follows: Christ is of the same being (*homoousios*) as the Father, not of similar being (*homoiousios*). In Him we see operations identical to those of the Father. While the soul is the human person, the body and the physical world are not evil. However, they may become so and stain the soul because of erroneous lines of thought and action. At resurrection, the soul is given the incorruptible body.¹⁹ As a consequence of grave changes in the politics between Byzantium and Persia, the Council of Chalcedon almost immediately became a stumbling block and a political tool in the conflict and rivalry for power.

After the advent of Islam, it was the Muslims who had specific and shared issues to advocate and defend, and often the topics of discussion were not decided by the Christians. As mentioned, in fact these topics were defined by the Prophet and clearly stated in the Qur'an. While Muslim polemical texts primarily raised objections against Christian doctrines, Christian texts—that were simultaneously apologetic and polemical—did not propose new theological topics for discussion. As circumstances changed and Islamic theology developed by the introduction of Greek logical sciences, the literature became more sophisticated but the themes remained more or less the same. Generally, Islam was seen and argued against in Biblical-apocalyptic, anti-heretical, the personality/credibility of its founder Muḥammad, and doctrinal contexts. These contexts overlapped, sometimes used in conjunction, or were taken individually as in 'ilm al-kalām.

In the Biblical-apocalyptic context, Islam was part of the divine plan for history. The Muslims were seen as the precursors of the Antichrist, and contrary to common impression, early Muslim conquests were not seen in religious perspectives. The Arabs were the Ṭayy, and the

caliphs were military and not spiritual leaders, they were simply kings.²⁰ Many medieval Christian authors saw the invading Muslims as “actors in a divine drama of the last days.” As predicted by the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Book of Revelation, the beginning of the end of time was at hand.²¹

Even though Monophysites like the Melkites, for example, felt relieved of Byzantine pressures, they still held a very negative disposition toward Islam. Dionysus of Tel Mahrê (d. 848), a Syrian Monophysite, believed that the Muslims were sent as punishment to the Byzantine Church for its Duophysite (or Chalcedonian) heresy and persecutions of other Christians. The Greeks on their part looked at Islam as a punishment for the Monophysites for their heresy.²² Some Armenians too, like Sebêos, saw a place for the Arabs in God’s plan for humanity. The Muslims were the fourth beast in Daniel’s prophecy. The pro-Byzantine anonymous Syrian author of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (c. 692) presented Islam as the last act in a cosmic drama.²³ Islam was also regarded as a divine punishment for sexual license, fornication, and homosexual practices among Christians in that age. To enhance the drama and his already intense imagery, Pseudo-Methodius accused the Muslims of gross acts of destruction, even of cannibalism. He predicted the mass conversion of Christians, as the final blow to the world.²⁴ Otherwise, during the early periods, there was little interest in the doctrines of Islam and no attempt to initiate a polemic or an apology. The Ishmailites, as they were often referred to in Armenian texts, or the Muslims, were pagans and actors in an apocalyptic drama.²⁵ Like few other texts, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo Methodius* became a reference and lingered on in apologetic/polemical literature for a long time.

In the anti-heretical context, Islam was defined as an Arian or a Christian heresy. For example, Anastasius, a seventh-century monk from the monastery of St. Catherine in Mount Sinai, looked upon the Muslims as Monophysitic heretics, and as such simply the allies of the demons. He invested in the differences between Islam and Christianity and emphasized the quasi-magical powers of the sacraments, which both the Christian sects and Islam rejected; hence, the alleged Arianism of Muḥammad.²⁶ Eighth-century Byzantine authors followed the lead of Anastasius. They questioned the radical monotheism of Islam and in return accused the Muslims of the adoration of the Goddess Khubar/Kubar (probably a name for the moon and Aphrodite).²⁷ Most Christian apologists and polemicists considered the Muslims as Arian heretics. In all cases however, even though these ideas were ineffective

on the ground, they provided significant motifs for early inter-faith literature and reflected mutual perceptions of the religious other.

B. Christian Apologists/Polemicists: Yuḥannā or John of Damascus (d. before 754)

In contrast to the Muslims, the Christian *mutakallimūn* [speculative theologians] were apologists, says Griffith. For them,

... *kalām* was principally a method of intellectually commending the credibility of Christian doctrines in response to objections coming from Muslims . . . [but] it was the religious concerns of the Muslims that set the agenda. The principal topics were always the unity of the one creator God, the Trinity of the persons (or *hypostases*) in the one God, and the Incarnation of God the Word. The Qurʾān itself sets this agenda, and the Christian apologists often quoted a telling phrase or two from it in the course of their arguments.²⁸

As Griffith and other scholars also believe, the audience of Christian apologists-polemicists were the Christians, not the Muslims, and their adversaries were hypothetical. The same is true in the case of Grigor and Matt'ēos as well. Their aim was primarily to teach the Armenians and the heterodox communities and to prevent new conversions into Islam. Conversions had proliferated during the fourteenth century, as they had previously as of the eighth century in Armenia. Polemicists wanted to demonstrate to the Christians that the challenges of Islam to their beliefs could be answered rationally, as they said, and as per the Gospels.²⁹ Griffith explains the process:

Christian *mutakallimūn* actually adopted a way of presenting the traditional teachings of the church in an Arabic idiom conditioned by the Islamic frame of reference in the midst of which they lived. In other words, Christian *kalām* was an exercise in what modern day commentators might call "inculturation," a process in which the doctrinal development consisted in the exploration of new dimensions of Christian truth, when that truth was considered from a hitherto unavailable or unexplained frame of reference.³⁰

Armenians had great respect for the Syrian theologians. Already during the fifth century, most texts were translated and read in the monasteries and monastic schools. A commentary on the Gospel of John by Jacobite Nonnus of Nisibis was preserved only in the Armenian version. Grigor and Matt'ēos followed the main lines of discussion and debate as established by the major Christian polemicists, without

ever making any mention of or reference to these authors and/or their works.

From the Umayyad Period and the first 'Abbāsīd century, some five Christian apologists-polemicists stand out: John of Damascus (or Yuḥannā al-Dimashqī (d. before 754), Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. after 829), East Syrian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (ninth century), West Syrian Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī (d. c. 835), and Jewish convert Jacobite Nonnus of Nisibis (d. after 862).

The earliest known apologetic/polemical texts belong to John of Damascus (ca. 676–ca. 754), better known as Yuḥannā Ibn Manṣūr Ibn Sarjūn al-Dimashqī. A Melkite and from a prominent Arabic speaking family in Damascus, he was one of the chief administrators in the courts of Umayyad Caliphs 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) and Walīd (705–715). Yuḥannā wrote in Greek. At the end of his life he withdrew to the Monastery of Mār Sabbas in Palestine, became a monk, and wrote most of his works there. Having spent most of his life at the Umayyad administration, Yuḥannā was naturally familiar not only with the Arab literary traditions but also with the doctrines and rites of Islam as well. He set out to correct Qur'ānic presentations of alleged episodes, such as the Crucifixion, and doctrines about Christ and Christianity, such as the Incarnation. This was current practice. For example, in the alleged correspondence between Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II and Byzantine Emperor Leo III, the latter ridiculed the claims of Islam about its Abrahamic descent, the true nature of the Ka'bah, etc. There were other abusive corrections of other matters.

The dozen pages on Islam in Yuḥannā's book titled *Fount of Knowledge* or *Wisdom* (in Greek) written in 743, laid down the bases for Christian apologetics and the formulation of responses. He also wrote a shorter work called *Disputation between a Saracen and a Christian*.³¹ *Fount of Knowledge* was a theological compendium of three parts on philosophical ideas, heresies, and the orthodox faith. He discussed Islam at the end of one hundred heresies, as the "religion of the Ishmailites," the "precursor of the Antichrist," thus placing it in the heretical context. He related that a "false prophet surnamed Mamed" appeared at the time and after a casual exposure to the Bible through an Arian monk called Baḥīra, Mamed established his own heresy. In other words, as the story goes, allegedly having been instructed by an Arian monk, Muḥammad became an Arian too. He denied the divinity of the Logos and the Holy Spirit. Paganism and the worship of Khubar were also mentioned.

In the case of complicated subjects, such as the Trinity, Yūḥannā declared these doctrines as “incomprehensible and inexplicable mysteries” which were beyond human reason.³² As we shall see, Grigor in turn believed that extreme rationalism would lead to skepticism and inevitably to heresy. In the case of the Trinity, for example, he followed Yūḥannā’s arguments in its defense. In fact he adopted the latter’s practical approach and didactic strategy. In his *Disputation between a Saracen and a Muslim*, Yūḥannā sought to provide “the beleaguered Christian with practical, defensive arguments to be deployed against Muslim proselytizers.”³³ Free will, creation, Christology, and Baptism were discussed, and as in the case of Armenian texts, his hypothetical Muslim adversaries were presented as aggressive and smart debaters. They persistently tried, as the texts presented them, to trick the Christians, but the latter managed to avoid and respond by well-formulated “responses.” Yūḥannā’s aim, as that of the Armenians, was to formulate simple and “rational” (as they all emphasized) answers to the classic Muslim arguments against Christianity. These hypothetical debates ended at the amazement of the Muslims and their silence at the Christians’ powerful defense and apology.³⁴

It must always be kept in mind that the essential aspect of the so-called apologetic/polemical debates or discussions of the Christian polemicists was their hypothetical nature and their Christian audience. There are very few exceptions. It is indeed hard to imagine actual debates in Umayyad Damascus and later on in Baghdad and elsewhere, in Armenia too, for example. Encounters of this nature would have had sad endings. Yūḥannā as well as Grigor and Matt’ēos wanted to educate their audience by showing them the contrast between the superiority of Christianity and the erroneousness and inferiority of Islam. As they all said in their introductory passages, they wanted to teach a Christian how to formulate responses to direct accusations or questions of the Muslims. The following is an example from John of Damascus:

They call us associators because, they say, we introduce an associate to Him [God] by saying that “Christ is the Son of God and God.” [In response, he first refers to the Bible.] If the prophets announced Christ’s coming, then if they are right we are too. Again we respond to them: Since you say that Christ is Word and Spirit of God, how do you scold us as associators. For the Word and the Spirit are inseparable each from the one in whom this has the origin. If therefore, the Word is in God it is obvious that he is God as well. If on the other hand, this

is outside of God, then God, according to you, is without word and without spirit. Thus, trying to avoid making associates to God, you have mutilated Him. . . . Therefore, by accusing us falsely, you call us associators, we, however, call you mutilators of God.³⁵

The next major polemicist was Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 750–c. 820–825), a student of Yuḥannā. He followed his teacher, but with greater sophistication and with the tools of Muslim theology (or ‘ilm al-kalām).³⁶ He represented the earliest generation of Christian mutakallimūn, and must have been so outspoken and clever that Muslim theologians took notice of him and set out to refute him. The main themes of his apologies were the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Sacraments, the practice of facing east in prayer, and the veneration of the cross and other images.³⁷ Born in Edessa, Abū Qurrah was the Chalcedonian (or Melkite) bishop of Ḥarrān (from 795 to 812). After being removed from his see by Theodoret (795–812), the bishop of Antioch, he travelled widely and took part in theological debates and polemics. Abū Qurrah was one of the first Christian authors who wrote in Arabic.³⁸ In Baghdad, he was said to have been involved in discussions with Muslim mutakallims. In his *Refutation of Outsiders* he is apologetic, but in *On True Religion* he aggressively argued in favor of the objective superiority of Christianity.³⁹

The novelty of Abū Qurrah’s approach is that, for the first time, both the apocalyptic and anti-heretical contexts were secondary and primacy was given to what he considered “objective truth” concerning the Qur’ān and the discussions of the mutakallimūn in this respect. The core of his argument is that any true religion is otherworldly and spiritual, and since “Islam is the religion for the enjoyment of this world,” it cannot be genuine. Christianity, on the other hand, is the religion of the other world and a preparation for it; therefore, it is the only true religion.⁴⁰ We find the exact same line of argument in the works of Grigor and Matt’ēos. Abū Qurrah took nine religious groups into consideration: the ancient pagans, the Majūs (Zorastrians), the Samaritans, the Jews, the Christians, the Manichaeans, the Marcionites, the followers of Bardaysān, and the Muslims.⁴¹ Naturally of these nine groups, he believed that Christianity alone “rings true to what the human intellect can recognize about God’s attributes, what should logically be permitted and forbidden to human beings, and about what should reasonably be their ultimate reward or punishment.”⁴² His entire strategy in sophisticated philosophical arguments was to show the

rationality, coherence, and superiority of Christianity over the other faiths with respect to the doctrine of God, rewards and punishments, and the lawful and the forbidden (*ḥalāl-ḥarām*). He also took the subjects of the prophets and miracles (as manifestations/proofs of prophecy).⁴³ Again, in many respects, even in the details, he seems to be one of the direct sources for Grigor and Matt'ēos. But it is difficult to trace the manners in which the works, or at least the ideas of Abū Qurrah became available in Tat'ew.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Abū Qurrah was a radical rationalist. He had confidence in human reason in all matters of religion, such as God's existence and truths of faith. Other theologians did not share this optimism. On the contrary, they insisted on the role of faith in revelation. Ḥabīb Ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, a Jacobite theologian, considered Abū Qurrah a sophist.⁴⁴ Indeed, Abū Qurrah was the first to indulge in speculative theology at the time when the Mu'tazilites of Baṣrah were thriving and challenging the traditional Ash'arite schools. Griffith observes that the accusations of sophistry do not hold in view of the fact that:

... Christian writers such as Abū Qurrah consciously constructed their apologetics to confirm the predominant thought patterns of the Muslim *muta'allimūn* [the educated, erudite], in whose realm they had to conduct their own apologetic campaigns, and in whose language they hoped to commend the veracity of Christian doctrines.⁴⁵

Another rationalist, Nonnus of Nisibis, was a familiar figure among medieval Armenian authors. According to Griffith, he was Abu Qurrah's Jacobite adversary in a Christological debate in 815 or 816 at the court of the Armenian Prince "Ashāt Msaker" (or Ashot Meat-Eater Bagratuni, 804–826).⁴⁶ Nonnus was taken to Samarrā', where in 856–862 he was said to have written an apologetic treatise in Syriac, which exhibits a similar appeal to reason. The form of this text is of great relevance to our discussion in this volume, because it seems that it was a direct reference for Armenian polemicists. In the manner of both Grigor and Matt'ēos, Nonnus introduces his text as a response to a request by an inquirer. He says that this text is:

... an answer to a request from a nameless inquirer to give an account of how the Christians can show that God is one and not many, how the one God is also three, and how the Word of God, one of the Trinity, can be said to have become incarnate, without thereby imputing an impropriety to God.⁴⁷

This is exactly how Grigor and Matt'ēos introduced their apologetics, the only difference was they mentioned specific people by name and location. According to Griffith, there are similarities between the texts of Abū Qurrah and Nonnus.⁴⁸ But, in general, even these rationalistic polemicists were inferior to the Muslim mutakallimūn in their knowledge of logic and philosophical methods. Of the rationalists, Yaḥyā Ibn 'Ādī (d. 974/364), the Jacobite or West Syrian Christian theologian, was also of importance. He set out to refute the most philosophical and violent attack on Christianity by Mu'tazilite Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (d. ca. 861/247).

C. Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. 820), Nonnus of Nisibis—The Genre of Letters and Epistles

In line with the Medīnan tradition of letters, this genre gained some significance too. The earliest and most familiar is the alleged correspondence between Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717–741) and Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II (717–720), as reported by Theophanes. Some historians, however, attribute this letter to Emperor Leo VI (886–912). There is a long version of this text preserved in the *History* of Lēwond. Some scholars consider it as the original text with minor additions, but it can also be a later addition. Authentic or not, it is the first Byzantine text which shows a fair understanding of Islam and sets out to refute it.⁴⁹ The motif of an inquirer seems to come from this tradition. In this letter, Leo III presumably responded to a request or inquiry by Caliph 'Umar II to send him an exposition of the Christian faith. The initiative was not customary. The caliph also asked Leo about the rise of seventy-two Christian sects, the adoration of the relics of apostles and prophets, as well as images and the cross.⁵⁰

Always according to this letter, in his answers to 'Umar's questions, Leo did not doubt that he and the caliph believed in the same God. They differed when it came to the New Testament. He did not think that the Qur'an was written by Muḥammad, but by Caliph 'Umar I (634/13H–644/24H), Abū Turāb, and the Persian Salmān al-Fārisī. A large part of the letter is devoted to the defense of the Holy Sacraments and images, their educational role, and sentimental significance.

Around the year 850, Emperor Michael III (842–867) allegedly received a request from the Arabs and asked the Byzantine philosopher Niketas Byzantios (fl. c. 850) to reply on his behalf. The caliph at the time must have been al-Mutawakkil (847/233H–861/874H), but the actual adversary, if there was one, is anonymous. Niketas was a scholar from

the circle of Bishop Photius. He was said to be better acquainted with Islam than others, at least he had read the whole Qur'ān. While Abū Qurrah was pragmatic and theoretical in his arguments to discredit Islam, Niketas was strictly theoretical and systematic, and followed the text of the Qur'ān closely. Two answers were written on this occasion in defense of the Trinitarian and other Christian doctrines. There are other similar letters where Christian authors emphasized the claim of tolerance by Muslims, and reminded the caliphs to stop the persecutions of Christians.

Risālat al-Kindī (Epistle of al-Kindī) by an anonymous author was a fictitious correspondence between two prominent members of the 'Abbāsid court. A certain al-Hāshimī converses with a friend who is a Nestorian monk called 'Abd al-Masiḥ al-Kindī. It was upon a request to convert from his friend al-Hāshimī that al-Kindī wrote a long refutation of Islam and an apology for Christianity.⁵¹ According to Tolan, both letters were written by the same person, that is, by someone who must have been a knowledgeable Christian and who also knew the Qur'ān well. As usual, the issue of the Trinity was central, but the prophethood of Muḥammad and his personal conduct were brought up too.⁵² The signs of prophethood and a comparison between the personalities and Laws of Christ and Muḥammad are parallel themes. Al-Kindī also brings up the issues of Islamic rituals such as ablution, fasting during the holy month of Ramaḍān, circumcision, marriage-divorce, eating pork, etc. In the last section, he presents some Christian doctrines and answers to Muslim charges of corrupting or falsifying (*tahrīf*) Christ's Gospel, to eliminate verses that referred to the Qur'ān and the Prophet.⁵³ As always, these themes are almost identical to those raised by Grigor and Matt'ēos.

III. Western-Crusader Perspectives— Eleventh–Thirteenth Centuries

By the end of the twelfth century the Christians of the Near East had accepted the irreversible Islamization of their world and the conversion of the Mongols around 1300 ended an era. Both Byzantium and the Crusaders had failed. For the Europeans, who were launching the political-religious project of the Crusades, the refutation of Islam could serve their interests, as they saw it. Their offensive had a missionary aspect too and polemics was a means. But being geographically distant and lacking in both information and contact, most western authors used the literature of Pseudo-Methodius, John of Damascus, Abū Qurrah, al-Kindī, and some others. The traditional apologetic/polemical styles

of the East shaped western polemical literature too, even though the circumstances and objectives were very different.

At the beginning of the twelfth century, less than ten years after Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders, Guibert de Nogent wrote *Dei Gesta per Francos* (Deeds of God through the Franks), a narrative of the First Crusade in a truly Crusader spirit, based on reports of others, as he says clearly. He spoke of the evils of a certain “Mathomus,” or Muḥammad, whom he did not know, but whose “malignity surpassed whatever evil can be said about him.”⁵⁴ Soon, some Latin authors decided to learn about Islam and more importantly, they wanted to legitimize their invasions into Muslim-held territories on theoretical grounds. A more learned and meticulous author, Petrus Alfonsi (born in Muslim Spain in late eleventh century), knew Arabic and dedicated a section of his *Dialogues against the Jews* (*Dialogi contra Iudaeos*, ca. 1110) to Islam. He was familiar with the works of the Arab-Christian polemicists and closely followed their lead.

One of Alfonsi’s readers was Peter the Venerable, the Abbot of Cluny (born in France c. 1092–1156). In 1142–1143, Peter traveled to Spain and for the first time commissioned a Latin translation of the Qur’an. He wrote two treatises and declared Muḥammad a heresiarch.⁵⁵ Pagan idolatry was again ascribed to Islam and its heretical nature was “established.”⁵⁶ Both Alfonsi and Peter of Cluny strongly maintained the theory of heresy.

At least four other authors of the twelfth century followed Arab-Christian polemical texts, with even more derogatory biographies of the Prophet of Islam.⁵⁷ First Latin visitors of Jerusalem began calling the Muslims “Agareni” (descendants of Hagar) rather than “Saraceni” (descendants of Sarah). Biographical notes about Muḥammad were malicious caricatures.⁵⁸ The objective was to justify and glorify the Crusaders and their actions against Muslim peoples. At any rate, their opinion of eastern religious cultures and the Christians was quite intriguing. Guibert de Nogent wrote:

The faith of the Easterners, which has never been stable, but has always been variable and unsteady, searching for novelty, always exceeding the bounds of true belief, finally deserted the authority of the early fathers. Apparently, because of the purity of the air and the sky in which they are born, as a result of which their bodies are lighter and their intellect consequently more agile, customarily abuse the brilliance of their intelligence with many useless commentaries. Refusing to submit to authority of their elders or peers, “they searched

out evil and searching they found" [Ps 63:7]. Out of these came heresies and ominous kinds of different plagues.⁵⁹

According to this analysis, heresy was a "noxious eastern import"⁶⁰ into the West. The idea was that being in a more stable and clear state of mind, the Christians of the West were justified in their actions against the heresies, one of which was Islam. The Latin world also wanted to see/create its political legitimacy in its Crusade against heresy as an "eastern" disease, and a travesty of true Christianity.

During the twelfth century, Spain was in a transitional period from Islamic to Christian dominations. In view of the high regard westerners had of Islamic sciences and arts, the task was more complicated. There were conversions from and into the other faith. Actual polemical exchanges happened between Christians and Muslims but always along the traditions of previous authors. The aim was to discredit Islam and praise Christianity to ease conversions. Many Muslims who had settled in the region converted anyway with no scruples.

As in the Near East, the motifs of Antichrist and heresy were often used, all in line with the corpus of the polemical texts. Peter of Cluny, the most sophisticated among these authors, used quotes from the Qur'ān as grounds for the Muslims to accept the validity of Christianity, instead of attacking the person of Muḥammad. Scripturally based refutations were his means of offense/defense against Islam. His *Contra Sectam siue Haeresium Saracenorum* (The Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens) survived in one manuscript, but the Latin translation of the Qur'an initiated by him, was preserved in eighteen copies.⁶¹

During the thirteenth century too, western authors built their accounts on existing literary traditions. As part of the Crusader campaigns and benefiting from the circumstances, missionaries traveled to the Near East, naturally into all parts of the Armenian world, east and west, including and especially Cilicia. Many Armenians and Arabs converted to Catholicism. The Franciscans had little knowledge of Islam, but the Dominicans knew Arabic, studied the Qur'ān and the Hadith, and got involved in debates with the Muslims of Spain. Only in the fourteenth century and after the final failure of the Crusades, polemical strategies shifted towards theories of shared truth.⁶²

Notes

1. John V. Tolan, *Saracens—Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 21.
2. *Ibid.*, 38–39.

3. William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (London: Routledge, 1991), 19–21.
4. Tolan, *Saracens*, 35.
5. Wadī' Zaidān Ḥaddād, "A Tenth Century Speculative Theologian's Refutation of the Basic Doctrines of Christianity: Al-Baqillānī (d. 1013)," in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddād and Wadī' Zaidān Ḥaddād (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 82–83.
6. Sidney H. Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah 'On Discerning the True Religion,'" in *Christian Arabic Apologies during the 'Abbāsid Period (750–1258)*, eds. Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1–43, 1–2.
7. Richard M. Frank, "The Science of Kalām," a privately circulated paper, as quoted by S. H. Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām," 3. Also see Richard M. Frank, *Beings and their Attributes: The Teaching of the Baṣrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1978).
8. Ibid., 83.
9. Ibid., 83.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 83–84.
12. See "Un Traité de Yaḥyā Ibn 'Ādī," *Revue de l'Orient Chretien* 2, no. 22 (1920): 4–14; Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 221–25.
13. Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd [or al-Tamhīd fī'l-Radd 'alā al-Mulḥidah al-Mu'aṭṭilah wa'l-Rāfiḍah wa'l-Khawārij wa'l-Mu'tazilah]*, eds. Richard J. McCarthy, S. J. (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Sharqiyah, 1957). Cited by Ḥaddād, "A Tenth Century Speculative Theologian's," 85.
14. Ḥaddād, "A Tenth Century Speculative Theologian's," 86.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 87.
17. Ibid., 89.
18. Watt, 2–3.
19. Ibid., 3.
20. Tolan, *Saracens*, 42.
21. Ibid., 45.
22. Ibid., 40.
23. *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, trans. J. Martinez, in "Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1985).
24. Tolan, *Saracens*, 47–48.
25. Ibid., 50.
26. Ibid., 43–44.
27. Ibid., 44.
28. Sidney H. Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion," in *Christian Arabic Apologies during the 'Abbāsid Period (750–1258)*, eds. Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1–43, 3.
29. Ibid., 6.

30. Ibid., 5.
31. Tolan, *Saracens*, 50–51.
32. Ibid., 53.
33. Ibid., 54.
34. Ibid.
35. John of Damascus, “*Liber de Haeresibus*,” in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. P. Bonifatius Kotter, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1969–1981), 4: 19–67, 4: 63–64.
36. Tolan, *Saracens*, 58.
37. Griffith, “Faith and Reason,” 8.
38. Some of works were translated into Greek but he was mainly known only to Arabic-speaking Christians. He also said to have written some treatises in Syriac. His writings provide an important witness to Christian thought in the early Islamic world. A number of them were edited with German translations by Georg Graf and have now been translated into English by John C. Lamoreaux.
39. Tolan, *Saracens*, 58.
40. Ibid., 59.
41. Griffith, “Faith and Reason,” 13–14.
42. Ibid., 15.
43. Ibid., 15–27.
44. Ibid., 37.
45. Ibid., 39–40.
46. Ibid., 41.
47. A. Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibis, traité apologétique; étude texte et traduction* (Louvain: Peeters, 1948), 45f.
48. See Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973).
49. Tolan, *Saracens*, 228.
50. See A. Jeffery, “Levond’s Text of the Correspondence between ‘Umar II and Leo III,” *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944): 269–332.
51. Tolan, *Saracens*, 60. See *Risālat al-Kindī – Dialogues Islamo-Chrétiens sous le Calife al-Ma’mūn 813–834: Les Épîtres d’al-Hāshimī et al-Kindī*, trans. George Tartar (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1985).
52. Tolan, *Saracens*, 61.
53. Ibid., 62–63.
54. Ibid., 135.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 136–37.
57. Ibid., 137.
58. Ibid., 138.
59. Guibert de Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos I*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, CCCM 127A (1996): 89–90. English translation Robert Levine, *The Deeds of God through the Franks* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 30. Cited by Tolan, *Saracens*, 144–45.
60. Ibid., 145.
61. Ibid., 163–64.
62. Ibid., 173.

The Armenian Mahmet/ Muḥammad

I. The Cycle of Mahmet Legends

The medieval Armenian world looked upon Islam in three contexts: Biblical-apocalyptic, Islam as God's punishment; anti-heretical, Islam as an Arian heresy; and as a cycle of legends about a villainous world-conqueror called Mahmet/Mehmet and his fictitious stories. The Armenians called his followers or the Mulsims, *Hagarac'ik'* (from Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah) and/or *Ismaelac'ik'*/*Ishmaelac'ik'* (from Abraham's son *Ismā'il*). In modern Armenian, the term for Islam is *Mahmetakanut'iwn* or "Mahmetism," which means the teachings of Mahmet. As the early *futūḥ* (or conquests) took the Muslim Arabs into the entire Near East, reactions to this militant religious-political culture varied, depending on location and circumstances, and the case of the Armenians was—and still is—the most unusual.

As I argued throughout this study, by virtue of their syncretism and often adoptionism, the medieval Armenian sects or heresies were direct channels of interaction to the other religious cultures in the region, including and especially doctrinal and political Islam after the seventh century. The literary-intellectual culture, however, indirectly yet exclusively depended on a dynamic cycle of legends (*araspel*) about the life and stories of a certain Mahmet from the deep desert. Medieval authors, who were men of the church, had no knowledge of literary Arabic and did not read the Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth* (Islamic Tradition) or the classic biographies of Muḥammad (known as the *Sīrah* literature). Their information about the beliefs and practices of the Muslims was never textual and depended on secondary sources. It is even more unusual to see that from the seventh century to the present, this legendary cycle about the founder of Islam persisted and summed up all that most Armenians—including clergy and academics—knew and cared

to know about Islam and its world. The Armenian Mahmet/Mehmet/Mahmat was and still is the protagonist of legends about a villainous and formidable world-conqueror. This is the argument of this chapter about the legendary context of the images of the Prophet of Islam in medieval Armenian literature and folklore.

So far known first translation of the Qurʾān—transliterated as *Łuran*—was made in the seventeenth century from Latin by Stepʾanos Lehaći (born in 1571, Poland, then entered Ėjmiacin). The title is: *This is the Scriptures of the Hagarians or the Ismaelites called Łuran*.¹

This translation was published by M. Y. Sĕtʾeancʾ in 1924, titled “An Armenian *Łuran* at India Translated by Vardapet Stepʾanos of Ilovians.”² Earlier, in 1910, a translation from Arabic by Apraham Amirxaneancʾ (Varna, 1838–1913) was published as simply *Łuran* in Istanbul. Two years later, in 1911/2, Lewon Larencʾ published a translation from a French version. In the same year, Yakob Kʾurbetʾean collaborated with an Arabic speaking co-author and published the translation of Amirxaneancʾ with a biography of Muḥammad. Almost a century later, in 2007, Iran initiated and financed a project for an Armenian translation of the *Qurʾān* from Persian, to be carried out under its supervision.³ In response to this project, someone wrote on the Internet, “. . . let the Hamshĕnis read this.”

Bishop Papken Guleserian made the first attempt to study Islam in Armenian literature. With an extensive introduction, comparative texts and notes, he published Grigor Tatʾewacʾi's *Ėnnĕm Taćkacʾ*, or Against the Taćiks (Tajiks, Muslims) for the first time. The title is: *Islamĕ Hay Matenagrutʾean mĕj: A. Grigori Tatʾewacʾwoy Ėnnĕm Taćkacʾ, B. I Kʾašunĕ Kʾalacu* (Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature: A. Against the Taćiks by Grigor Tatʾewacʾi, B. Excerpts from the Kʾašun).⁴ This is a chapter in Grigor's *Book of Questions*. But to avoid Ottoman censorship, it was removed from the first publication of the book in Istanbul in 1929.⁵ Guleserian also published the Karshuni (Arabic text in Syriac letters) about the founder of Islam and his teachings. He argued that this semi-legendary text, allegedly by a so-called eyewitness, circulated in various versions in Armenia from very early periods, and that it was the only source that most if not all Armenian authors utilized and referred to. Other valuable studies in the same broad direction are R. W. Thomson's, “Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam in Armenian Literary Tradition” and “Armenian Variations on the Bahira Legend.”⁶

There are many references to Islam in medieval and modern Armenian histories but rarely any interest was detected among scholars

to understand and conceptualize this religion, independent of the political background of Islam as the faith of oppressive rules. Furthermore, the historicity of the experience with Islam and the nature of the interactions were in turn left untouched. As mentioned, while the most direct links with both political and doctrinal Islam were through the heresies, Armenian authors almost completely depended on what I call the Cycle of Mahmet Legends. It began taking shape as of the historian Sebēos, a contemporary to and historian of the early Islamic futūḥ into the region of Armenia in late 630s. In its evolution, the Cycle combined the Biblical, anti-heretical, and biographic contexts, and the Karshuni (Arabic text in Syriac alphabet) translated into Armenian, also known as *K'ašun*. This text is a “true” account of the life and teachings of Muḥammad as witnessed and narrated by his disciple, who according to the story, fled to the Island of Crete and converted to Christianity. A version of the legend of the Christian monk Sergius Baḥīrā is also mentioned in this text and several versions of the legend are mentioned in Armenian. Contrary to most versions of the Christian Baḥīrā legends, the Armenian *K'ašun* made no reference to the alleged prediction of the Arian monk about the prophethood of Muḥammad.⁷ In some Armenian sources there is even the view that Baḥīrā wanted to baptize Muḥammad.⁸

As of the seventh century, a chain of accounts by historians took shape assimilating the Karshuni, legendary-folkloric images of Mahmet and his religion, as well as some historical data and interpretations by individual authors. Each author repeated and/or edited the existing material, depending on the context in his work. Some authors like Mxit'ar Anec'i simply paraphrased the entire Karshuni, while others provided summaries mixed with other elements. To the end of the fourteenth century, even Grigor Tat'ewac'i and his student Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i—the first and only Armenian polemicists/apologists—again depended on the Cycle of Mahmet Legends, previous accounts, and in particular the polemical works of Arab Christian authors. Their hypothetical adversaries seem to be Persian, not Arab, and the Persian terms and phrases cited in their treatises are not quotes, but popular phrases. Their knowledge of Islamic tenets and rites, as well as their arguments against the Muslims, are heavily based on the works of John of Damascus (d. before 754), Theodore Abū Qurrah, Nonnus of Nisibis (both of the ninth century, the latter is said to have known Armenian), and a few others. Translations of these texts were widely available in the Armenian monastic schools and libraries. As previously discussed,

these and other polemicists in the 'Abbāsīd world knew Arabic well and had first-hand knowledge of the Qur'ān, the Islamic Tradition, and everything that was available at the time. On their part, the Muslim theologians (or the *mutakallimūn*) too were familiar with the Bible, the treatises of Christian polemicists and made direct references to both, using Aristotelian logic. Against this background, the following questions impose themselves: Who was the Armenian Mahmet and what were his teachings? How close was this image to the Qur'ānic Muḥammad and the Qur'ān? Why did legend replace text for centuries in Armenian intellectual culture?

II. The Armenian Mahmet and His Teachings

In order to draw the evolution of the Mahmet legends, the accounts of major authors are briefly presented below in chronological order. According to Sebēos, the first historian of the early invasions, Mahmet was an Ismaelite, a descendant of Abraham from Hagar, the Egyptian servant of Sarah. He became a merchant by profession and at some point, by "divine command," he began preaching monotheism to his people, who were pagan at the time.⁹ This was the earliest basic account about the founder of Islam. The next historian Łewond (end of the eighth century) made no specific comments about Mahmet in his *History*, and in his opinion the latter's alliance with Jews was one of the reasons for his success.¹⁰ Brief yet the most significant comments about the Armenian connection with Islam came from Catholicos Yovhan Ōjnec'i (d. 728). He described the Muslims as heathens and "oppressors" and directly connected the Armenian Paulicians to them (in his treatise against them). He said that the Paulicians were not only the sympathizers and satellites of the "oppressors" but also read their scriptures (the Qur'ān) and taught it to their own children.¹¹ Otherwise, in most texts of these and later times, the Muslims are often referred to as "impious" (*ambarišt*) people with "fictitious" (*karcec'eal*) tenets.¹²

After a silence of almost two centuries, during the early tenth century, T'ovma Arcruni, the historian of the Arcruni dynastic house of Vaspurakan, had the first and most extensive account of Muḥammad's life and teachings in his book, *History*.¹³ In his opinion, the Ismaelites simply replaced the oppressive Sassanians. Concerning the circumstances of the rise of Islam, he began at an alleged episode of a conflict between the Byzantines and a community of 12,000 Jews in Edessa, followed by their expulsion and migration to Medīnah in the desert.

As “sons of Abraham,” these Jews asked the Ismaelites, their “brothers” as descendants of Abraham, for assistance and formed an alliance with them. T’ovma described the people of *Mak’ay* (or Mecca) as warlike heathen Ammonites, who worshipped Samam and Kabar. Obviously, T’ovma had the Karshuni as his reference, as the rest of his account shows. The story of the orphaned child “Mahmet son of Abdla” (or Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdallāh) comes at this point. According to T’ovma, Mahmet was adopted by his uncle *Aputalp* (or Abū Ṭālib), then employed by a merchant, after whose death he married his widow (no name) and began his own business. It was during his travels that he reached Egypt and met a monk called *Sargis Bhira* in Egypt, who was a “disciple of the mania of the Arians” and taught Mahmet many things about the Old Testament and that God has no son by nature. The monk Bhira told Mahmet that if he accepted these teachings, he would become “a great general and the teacher of his race.” He also taught Mahmet of God’s promise to Abraham and of the rites of circumcision and sacrifice and other things. Mahmet went through a period of confusion, a “fearsome and demonic inspiration fell upon him” and when asked by his companions he said, “Some fearsome angel’s voice fell on me and ordered me to go as a messenger to my nation, to show [them] God the creator of heaven and earth, to take upon myself the title of leadership and to refute and destroy the false faith in idols.” Many at Mecca believed his claim of being God’s Messenger. He still was under the “pressure of the angel” and one day at the suggestion of his cousin ‘Alī, he went out to the people to preach, but a fight broke out between his sympathizers and others who resented his ideas. Accompanied by forty followers, Muḥammad and ‘Alī moved to *Madiam* (or Medinah). There he made a pact with the Jews of the city, who even gave him a wife. T’ovma describes a joint attack on Mecca with the Jews, the destruction of the idols, and a proclamation of the temple as the “house of Abraham.” Muḥammad, he said, subjugated the population by the sword and declared himself “head and leader of them all” and appointed his companions, *‘Alī*, *Apubik’r*, *Amr* (‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ), and *Ut‘man* (‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān) as his officers. T’ovma also spoke of negotiations between the Muslims and the Byzantines, after the failure of which the Greeks simply gave up. Scared of the prospects, the Christians of Jerusalem took the holy objects and church ornaments to Constantinople. Eventually, the Muslims conquered all of Judea. Upon these successes, according to T’ovma, when the Arian monk Bhira showed up and claimed credit, Muḥammad simply killed him.

Deviating from the Karshuni, but still within the circle of legends, T'ovma did not consider Mahmet as the author of the Qur'ān, but a Persian man called Salmān, who was the disciple of a hermit (Nestorian?) in Persia. When Salmān arrived in Medīnah, Muḥammad asked him to write a "book of laws for his nation" by the hand of *Aput'uraba* the Ismaelite, for he was illiterate. Salmān put together what he had heard from the hermit and strange ideas of his own, but "moved by a raving spirit Muḥammad had him write perverse [things]." The result was the Qur'ān, which is a "fictitious book." In this book, continues T'ovma, Muḥammad said that he was the "consoler whom the Lord Christ had promised to send to his disciples." He even considered himself equal to Christ the Savior, as was predicted by Isaiah, that there would be two messengers: one riding a donkey and the other a camel. Speaking of rites, T'ovma explains that Muḥammad replaced Holy Baptism by ablution or constant washing with water for "purification." The hedonism of Muḥammad being a focal point for criticism by most polemicists, T'ovma also mentioned that Muḥammad described heaven as a place where food, drink, and especially women were plentiful, and felt sorry for all those who fell under the rule of Muslims, whose end he also predicted. Muḥammad lived twenty years in his new faith, says T'ovma, and "appointed *Apubikr* as the leader of the Arabs" after him. There are some new elements in T'ovma's *History*, which was extended twice. Episodes, such as the alleged correspondence between Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II (717–720) and Emperor Leo III (717–741), are later additions.¹⁴ In the case of T'ovma, there is also the factor of location. Being a native of Rštunik', south of Lake Van in the southern parts of Armenia, he was in direct contact with Muslims and more familiar with their folklore than others in Siwnik' in the north east. Otherwise, he showed no knowledge of the Qur'ān or Arabic.

Catholicos Yovhan V Drasxanakertc'i (898–929), a younger contemporary of T'ovma, added nothing new to the latter's information. His Mahmet came from a modest background and was raised in "servitude" (or of base origins).¹⁵ Of the same period more or less (finally compiled in early twelfth century), the *History of Caucasian Albanians* by Movsēs Kałankatwac'i-Dasxuranc'i repeated T'ovma's account.¹⁶

Grigor Magistros (d. 1058) seemed to know more about Islam and the Qur'ān, and claimed to know Arabic. He may have been aware of the circulating legends as well as the Karshuni, but being very well versed in Greek literature and definitely familiar to the works of John of Damascus and other Greek polemical texts, he had access to more

information. He refuted the idea that Muḥammad knew the Old Testament and included it in the Qur'ān. He also rejected the Muslims' comments on the Christians' "contamination" of the Bible or the omission of sections where the coming of Muḥammad was prophesized. Magistros also dealt with Muḥammad's comment on the Crucifixion, that it was a deception and it was not Christ who was crucified but someone else.¹⁷ Otherwise, he had no specific comments on the life of Muḥammad.

Some novel ideas and analysis appeared in the *Chronicle* of Samvêl/Samuêl Anec'i at the end of the twelfth century. The inclusion of a new figure called *K'alart'/K'ert'/K'alert'* alongside Mahmet, and the depiction of both as conquerors and initiators of broad invasions into the entire region and Armenia are very explicitly and for the first time stated in Samvêl's account. Historically, the most significant novelty is Muḥammad's "Pact" with or Oath to Armenians that allowed them to maintain their faith freely, surely against payment of taxes and obedience. Not taking note of the Medinan background of Islamic oaths to non-Muslims and allegedly to Armenians,¹⁸ and Muḥammad's direct role in shaping the politics of Islam toward the *dhimmīs*, as well the themes for polemics, Thomson assumes that Muḥammad was "credited with an arrangement only worked out under his successors."¹⁹ The following are excerpts from Samvêl Anec'i on Islam and the Prophet in Thomson's translation:²⁰

615. In those days appeared the false prophet of the Saracens, a sectary of Cerinthus and the Arians, called Mahmet, from the race of Ismael, son of Hagar. He was instructed by a solitary called *Bxira* of the sect of Arius, in the Sinai desert, where they [the Ismaelites] had settled and multiplied when Sarah expelled the hand-maiden from her sight.

618. Some historians say the exodus [*Hijrah* to Medinah] of Mahmēt the false prophet occurred in the sixty-fifth year [=616], others in the sixty-second, and others in the sixty-eighth.

647. . . . now in the days of Constans, son of Heraclius, Dvin was taken by the Arabs, says the historian [?], and on the day of the holy epiphany in the holy martyrdom of Saint Sargis 20,000 were killed; the holy altar and font were covered with the blood of the slain. They also took captive more than 30,000 others. Then the Patriarch Nersēs gathered the corpses of those who had fallen in the battle and buried them in the same martyrdom which he restored for them. Here resides the chief of the race of Ismael whose first name is *K'alart'* [Khaled Ibn al-Walid?], as scripture relates: "The sweet-lipped people shall

sate their swords with blood.” (Sirach, 12.16 ff, with a pun on *k’alcr*). He lived for eight years then died, after him, *Amaran* (was chief) for twelve years. When *Kalart’* reached Damascus in Mesopotamia, he ravaged and plundered as far as the city of Amida. Then set out three (generals): one to Rome (Constantinople), called *Yaz* [Yazīd?], with *Yovēl* as advisor; they slaughtered 70,000 of the Romans. To the region of Persia he sent the emir *Ot’man* [Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān] and the general *Mawiē* [Mu‘āwiyah]. They defeated *Miwrdat* with 20,000 and Mušel [Mamikonian] the *sparapet* of Armenia and his army. Then they ruled the whole land of Armenia, Persia, Egypt, Media, Parthia and Palestine.

Now the reason for their rule is the following: There was a certain prince of the regions of Damascus called Sargis. He used to rob the Ismaelite traders of many possessions. Three times *Klert’* implored him and he ceased. Then he gathered the cavalry of his own race, and raiding three times, captured his own and theirs. And when he dominated Armenia then he began to circulate their faith, but they did not accept it. So the Ismaelite prince found a certain confidant called Mahmet, the chief of the traders . . . [the latter met . . .] an Egyptian who knew a little about the laws of Moses but was grounded in the heresy of Arius and Cerinthus, in that he spoke of a bodily kingdom on earth, food for the belly and marriage after resurrection. He taught laws opposed to the old and new legislations, with unworthy thought and twisted words. Very derisively he corrupted the covenant of Abraham, as it is written: “Every one of your males shall be circumcised on the eighth day.” But he (ordered to be circumcised) not only males but even females, thereby detestably mocking the token of the lord’s pact. And with simple water (he said they were) to wash always, instead of the font of baptism. And many other unworthy and erring traditions [he instituted] and most ridiculous ones. This man [Mahmet] he [Klert’] acquired as lawgiver, messenger and general for twenty years. They destroyed Bznunik’, Aliovit and Tarōn.

Then Mehmēt stayed the sword, and by the word of his instruction they subjected to themselves the greater part of the universe. With an eternal oath he sealed a deed for the land of Armenia (that) they could freely observe Christianity. And he sold [*vačareac*] them their faith, taking from every household four *drachmas* [*dirhams*], three bushels of *xorbal*, one nose-bag, one cord of hair, and a gauntlet. But from the priests, nobles and cavalry he ordered no tax to be taken.²¹

Around the middle of the thirteenth century, in 1248, the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian was already translated into Armenian in a second version. The references to Islam in this and other Armenian versions seem to have been later additions by translators and/or scribes because they are very similar to the accounts of medieval Armenian authors.

These sections do not appear in the Syriac manuscript translated and published by Chabot.²²

The most extensive account about Muḥammad appeared in the *History* of Mxit'ar Anec'i (end of the twelfth century and early thirteenth century). According to Guleserian, the source of the entire section was the Karshuni which he found at St. Yakob, Jerusalem, in Manuscript No. 1288, fols. 231b–238a, dated 1273 (restored in 1624 by order of Grigor Vardapet Daranałc'i). The title is *I K'ašunēn K'alacu* (or Excerpts from the Kašun).²³ The author is a Syrian Christian and his text is obviously translated into Armenian, and according to Guleserian this was the only source available and in circulation in Armenia much before Mxit'ar. K. Patkanean, the publisher of the *History* of Mxit'ar, has an appendix (*Yawelwac*) in which he included the sections on Muḥammad in the histories of Vardan Patmič', Samvėl Anec'i, Kirakos Ganjakec'i, Yovhan Kałankatwac'i, and T'ovma Arcruni.²⁴ While none of these authors mentioned the Karshuni, as their source, Guleserian discovered it by juxtaposing the Karshuni (the Jerusalem in Manuscript 1288 of St. Yakob, Jerusalem, subtitled "Concerning Mahmet") and Mxit'ar's account. Mxit'ar simply paraphrases the entire Karshuni in rhetorical ornamental language and added few ideas and information on his part. He also has some elements from Lewond and Samvėl Anec'i about taxes, invasions, and such. The point that concerns us is that all medieval Armenian authors took the Karshuni as a credible testimony about Islam and its founder. Through Mxit'ar's text the entire Armenian K'ašun officially entered the literary tradition and became a reference for subsequent authors as well.²⁵ Chapters 25 and 26 in Mxit'ar's *History* are devoted to this subject.²⁶ Mxit'ar omitted the introductory section of the Karshuni, but at the end of Chapter 25 he gave credit to the "blessed man who came from Crete," a disciple of Muḥammad, who revealed the truth about him and his teachings.²⁷ For its great significance, Mxit'ar's version of the Karshuni is below in Thomson's translation.²⁸

Chapter 25. *"Concerning the fables of the impious Mahmet and his falsehood, which his disciple narrated"*²⁹

Now that we have arrived (at that place) to tell of the impious Mahmet, let us set out the multitude of his error so that you may completely hate and flee his name, O Christ-loving soul. To this very day they still ignorantly go on pilgrimage to Mecca, offer gifts to demons, and thoughtlessly perform the rite of the former idolatrous devil-worship, not knowing what they are doing. Now you can know their deeds, as they ignorantly reckon the worship of demons to the worship of God.

There was at that time a man, he says, [the narrator of the Karshuni] a man called Mahmet from the tribe called Kureš, from the sons of K'edar of the twelve tribes of Ismael. Coming to the holy mountain of Sinai, he studied with a certain hermit who knew the Ismaelite tongue and also Persian. He was called Bxira. Receiving him, he wished to inform him about everything. Beginning from creation, he read to him in progressive order the book of Genesis and all the others, the New Testament and the book which they call the *Childhood of Jesus*.³⁰

While he only heard the divinely inspired scriptures and did not comprehend them correctly, he had reason to go to the innermost desert, and thereafter never returned to his teacher. His mind did not love Christianity, but his thoughts were seeking to know what Judaism was. Meeting a certain Jewish merchant, he learned from him their rites and faith. He despised that also. And he began his own invention to proclaim a new faith, opposed to the truth and false.

Scorning all cults like Antichrist, he decreed (laws for) only his own. Coming to the village of Mecca, which is beyond Yathrib (*Ep'icrip'*) Medina, their capital, he preached in accordance with his own whim and pleasure, proclaiming the house of their tribal gathering, that is of the cult of snakes, was the house of God and the house of Abraham; he called it al-K'aaba. And he said that Ismael married a wife, and this is his house. When Abraham longed to see him, he said to Sarah: "Let me go that I may go and see my son." But Sarah was suspicious that perhaps he might approach the handmaiden [Hagar]. She imposed an oath by God on him: "Do not descend from your beast to the ground, but remaining on it see your son and return here." When he arrived he did not meet Ismael because he was hunting. So he questioned his wife: "Where has your husband gone?" But she insulted and scorned him, saying "O mad and tottery old man, for what purpose do you seek my husband?" He replied: "Tell your husband that the doors of your house are not in good shape; change it and make other doors."

When Ismael returned from the hunt, his wife did not tell him, neglecting Abraham's command. But Ismael, perceiving his father's odor, questioned his wife "Did some stranger (come) here?" She said: "An old man." Ismael asked, "What did he say?" When his wife informed him, Ismael knew that he had referred to his wife. He dismissed her and took another wife. In like fashion, he (Abraham) met the second wife and the third, as far as the seventh. And she said to Abraham: "Welcome father, come down from your beast that I may anoint your head." But he said: "I do not consent." When the wife entreated him, Abraham descended—not to the ground because of the oath to Sarah, but he put one foot on a rock and kept the other astride (the beast). The rock gave way to his foot, showing the imprint.

This he so taught from fables, and he ordered (people) to come from every region to offer worship to that stone and house. And inside the house he ordered them to worship as they circle the stone, which is the

other stone and a hole for their feet. Furthermore, he ordered them to circle the outside stone where Abraham's footprint is, skipping on one foot and saying: "*Lbayk', lbayk'*," as if replying to someone: "*Yay, yay, awas, awas.*"

Then crossing the valley which they call Vordn al-Haram, they slaughter animals there. And riding a beast, they rush without turning back as far as the hill near Mecca. As they flee, if anyone's coat falls or (the horse) throws the rider, they do not turn back or raise him up. After that they run on foot between two rocks which they call Safa and Emran; they run from rock to rock seven times and without a pause as energetically as they can. Then they to another place which they call *Mak'a al Has*. Seven times they run and throw stones, and it is not clear at whom they throw stones. They merely say that Mahmet did thus. And he gave a command, saying "Abraham did likewise." This was said imprudently by him, for he said: "He did not descend from his mount," and later he belied it (saying): "He ran and threw stones." And they do not slaughter reptiles in that spot, crawling things or wild beasts because of the snakes which dwell in the house, mingling with the humans but not harming any of those they all *muslims*- that is "believers." And they cover over the house with seven draperies, and kissing the drapery they place it on their eyes.

Now the erring deceit of their silly nonsense is not obvious to us. For many who do not know all this, see those races of men engaged in all these rituals and assiduous at prayer and continually saying "by God," and they suppose them to be believers. Therefore I considered it important to reveal the secrets of their deceit.

The house which they call Abraham's, neither Abraham nor Ismael ever went to, as the divine histories testify. But it is house of idols of the cult of snakes. For the tribal gathering takes place in the house, where they raise snakes up to the present time., as we have said. But the idols were removed by a foray of Egyptians at the time of Trajan. For the statues were of bronze, and with other deities they set them up in Alexandria. Then the Arabs found other idols, that the idols of *Dimaskos Riman*, in some desert. At the coming of Christianity its priests were afraid that it might fall into the hands of Christians and be broken up, so they took it and fled into the desert. Later the idolatrous Arabs found it and took it to Mecca with its priest to that house, wishing to set it up in the famous site of their first idols. But the snake-worshipping priests did not agree to setting up the idols of foreign priests in their own house and persuaded the crowd that the house was sufficient for the snakes only, on the ground that the snakes would not like the foreign priests in their own dwelling. On this pretext they set it outside the door on the rock, standing on one foot and holding up the other, as if the image of Raman was like the image of Hephaistos or as if this itself was Raman, called Hephaistos by the Damascenes. Hollowing it out with iron, bonding it with lead,

they set it on one foot on the rock. In the time of Theodosius through the neglect of the ministers, since it was standing outside the building, it was stolen by Ethiopian merchants for its gold. Therefore there was a war between two (countries) (as) they relate in Egypt by tradition down today. This is the footprint on the rock which Mahmet said was Abraham's—which the Arabs circle on one foot, imitating the one-footed Raman. And they worship its demon and cry out, and do not know.

Likewise they do not understand for whom they slaughter animals in the valley or from whom they flee. But after investigating we discovered that Mahmet, going aside from the multitude of people into the valley, sacrificed to the demons. Rushing to him, the demons appeared to him in human form, and terrified by them Mahmet fled. The same (story) he handed down.

But as for their running between the rocks were their cults before the former idols, like that rock which is inside the house. And the demons forced the cult of themselves on Mahmet from the two rocks. For this reason he ran fast hither and yon in his frenzy; and the same he legislated.

Furthermore, as he was going out in haste to the cult of the house, some mad dog followed him in to seize him. But Mahmet escaped by throwing a stone. Thinking this (?) to be strange and obstructive to his worshipping he handed down the same. But as for their saying that Abraham went there seven times, they greatly lie. And those who do not kill reptiles and creeping things and wild beasts, render honor and reverence to the snakes. Just as the chief magi in Yazkert's letter to the Armenians, the same they legislated: that snakes and lizards and other insects/reptiles are not to be killed, because they were gods and their cults (were observed) among them. All this the blessed man. Who was knowledgeable and came from the island of Crete, believed and revealed and made known.

Chapter 26. *Now we shall tell of his death—truly worthy of derision*

For when Mahmet died, they wrapped him and placed him in his garden; they did not bury him because he had promised that on the third day he would rise, like Christ. And when the guards were asleep, dogs entered and ate the face of the corpse. Consequently it was prescribed by his disciples to kill dogs in that month. Observing this custom up to the present day, they kill dogs in that month.

And there is more for me to say about his religion and rites and laws, full of folly. He suggested the idea to his followers that just as the prophets had foretold about Christ, so also they had foreseen about Mahmet, indicating the prophetic declaration; Jesus on an ass and he on a camel," taking as their testimony the vision of Isaiah: "I saw, he says, one riding an ass and one riding a camel." This he said in his city Medina while sitting on the crowded square. And while he

was speaking he disappeared from sight for a long time, and great astonishment seized them all. Then, while they were talking, he stood among them and greeted them saying, saying: "Peace (be) with you, and mercy and grace." Awestruck, they were lost in wonder and said: "Where have you come from and what is this greeting of yours, and from what gods have you brought such a saying of mercy and grace?" He replied: "Behold, while I was speaking to you, I was snatched up by an angel and found myself in Mecca, in the house of our fathers Abraham and Ismael, which they had built as a house of God and as an inheritance for us; just as once the Jews and prophets built Jerusalem as a dwelling for the sons of Israel." For he had heard of the snatching of Ambakum from Jerusalem to Babylon to Daniel, and attributing the same to himself so told them. But his words were never true. He hid from them that he had seen Mecca and told them the description of the place, of the sites and buildings, and all the distinguishing features of the region he reported to them by magic just as he had known them from his youth. Therefore they were all astonished and said he was a prophet. When he heard this from their mouths he was emboldened to preach and say: "Bear witness that there is no God except He, and He has no companion, and Mahmet is his servant and apostle." In such fashion did he reason, announcing one God according to the Jewish (faith). But by saying that he has no companion, he thereby divided the Son and the Spirit from the Father. And thus he taught them: "The God whom our fathers and the prophets worshipped, I am preaching to you." Thereby he persuaded the people. And furthermore he distinguished them from the Jews who said that Christ was only a man and the son of Joseph, and crucified by themselves. But he called Jesus the Word of God and the Spirit sent from God to Mary, and he took from a body in human fashion. And he adduces the word of God as testimony, saying "Thus said God, that we have sent our Spirit to her, who took the form of a man." And he said that the Jews did not crucify him, but he counterfeited (himself) to them. And he did not reckon them able to crucify the Word of God or (for him) to be crucified by them. And he was not subject to death, but remains alive and will come to the world in the latter times. And he praised Christians and accepted the gospel and the prophets. And he anathematized the Jews, since they denied Christ and abjured him, and killed the prophets.

Now Mahmet made his legislation from the old laws and the gospel, but changed by willing inventiveness what he liked, as laid down by himself and not taken from someone else, whatever he legislated for his people. And he performed apparent miracles in front of the people like a present (manifestations of) the future Antichrist, of whom our Lord Jesus Christ warns. As the harbinger of Antichrist he prepared a road for him, for at that time he called trees from the forest by name. And departing from their midst, it came walking and stood before

them. Then he ordered it to go back to its place. And he made men think mountains moved. And lifting up his hands, from his fingers he made a stream flow apparently. A mortal poison they say, was prepared for him. A kid having been roasted and set before him, he wished to eat. But the kid spoke in hearing of many: "Do not eat of me, for a mortal poison has been prepared in me for you."

And when robbers fell on him in a caravan wishing to despoil him . . . and them. . . . But they gathered in one place, camped in the dry plain and made the sea encircle him. The robbers were held at the edge of the sea, and after remaining three days went away empty. And these saw themselves on the dry land, where there was no moisture. This they say his uncle did, and learning from him, he (Mahmet) did likewise. But many of his people did not believe his fabulous nonsense. They say also that he showed to men the moon divided into four parts distinct from each other, then gathered it back into one full circle. But as for throwing of stones which we mentioned above, they invent the following story: when God expelled Adam from Paradise, he settled him in this world. And when he saw Satan in that spot where we throw stones, he recognized that he was the one who had deprived us of life, and taking stones he threw them at him. Therefore we do the same.

Now when he had told them what he had to say and had proclaimed himself a messenger, then they begged him to lay down laws for themselves. He promised them to ask God the next day what he might command, and dismissed them. He had a heifer that had just given birth brought to that public square and the calf kept at home. And whatever he himself desired he wrote down and fixed on the heifer's horn, then led it to the desert. Then at the time of the assembly, he ordered the heifer to be released. He and the assembly awaited its arrival, as if for some visitation from above. When the heifer appeared making an uproar, he offered up thanks. Taking the writing he read it with veneration and ceremony, and the law that had come from heaven.

All this his disciple revealed to us, unmasking the deceit of those heretical fables. He came and was baptized on the island of Crete by the inspiration of the providential will of God. And we wrote down his fable and obscene deceit for the information and warning of fearers of Christ, that they might flee and detest that hater of God.³¹

Mxit'ar ends his story here, but the Karshuni continues:

They write this down in the Qur'an as the introduction, which they call *Surat al-Baqara*, that is, "discourse of the cow, or, laws." Then he opened (the paper) and read it in the hearing of the people, and they supposed that the very cow with the paper had been sent from heaven.

And he ordered them to perform the ritual of prayer seven times a day, with washing of the hands and feet and face at morning and night. And instead of the Jewish trumpets and lyres at the time of psalm-singing or our bell-ringing (*žamaharut'awn*), he ordered them to build a tall *mnira* in the middle of the city. He selected someone with a loud voice and called him *modin*, that is "he who bears (witness to) the faith." And he ordered him to go up, on the grounds that God so ordered the prophets: "Go up to the heights, O evangelist of Sion. Raise up powerfully your voice, O evangelist of Jerusalem." And he ordered him to call up loudly three times.

O honorable readers, when you read the history of the false prophet Mahmet, curse him and loudly praise God. And make a worthy recollection of this unworthy scribe Mxit'ar and my parents, and remember (them) in the eternal day, Amen.

In his collection of chronicles, Vardan Vardapet Patmič' (or historian) (1181–1251) gave a summary version of Mxit'ar's account. He did not follow the Karshuni, as Mxit'ar did, and provided more information on Muslims' rites. He also referred to Sebēos in his discussion of the "twelve tribes of Ismael," Byzantine defeat, and the removal of the relics from Jerusalem before its fall to the Arabs. Samvėl Anec'i's references to Kałert' were mentioned too. Below is Vardan's account of Muḥammad and his teachings in Thomson's translation:³²

Vardan, Ch. 34(61)

At that time there was a man from among the sons of Ismael whose name was Mahmat', a merchant. He was born in the city of Madina, a two days' journey from Mak'a, from the tribe called Korēš, the son of Abdlay, who died having him an orphan. He joined a certain merchant, and made progress in his house, when the merchant died, he gained control of his master's house, marrying his wife (widow). He used to go with camels to Egypt. And there he met him a certain hermit named Sargis, of the sect of Arius and Cerinthus, who taught him (about) God from the old books and (taught him) the *Book of Childhood of our Lord*.³³ On his return home he preached what he had heard. But his family persecuted him. So he went to the desert of P'aran. And when the 12,000 Jews arrived, using them as a pretext, he preached the God of Abraham to the sons of Ismael; and he assured them that if they worship him they would inherit the land that God had given to Abraham.

[After describing the Muslim success against the Byzantine army, Vardan continues]

It was the year of our era 67 [AD 618]. And because the advice of Mahmet had succeeded, they asked him for laws. And he called the

site of the temple of snakes that worshipped *al-K'ayuba*, which is "gate of God." And he called the city where he lived "house of Abraham." Because Christianity was strong [there?] they took the idol of Damascus, Remana . . . which is bald Hephaistos—and threw it into the desert. Finding it, the Arabs brought it to the temple of snakes. But the priests of the snakes did not wish to place it there; taking it outside, they made a site for one of its feet on a rock and set it there. The Ethiopian merchants stole it for the gold that the Ismaelites had cast it in. So there was a serious war between the two nations until they forgot [the cause?]. About it [the site?] he [Muḥammad] said: It is the footprint of Abraham, when he came to see his son Ismael. And because Ismael was out hunting he asked his wife: "Where is your husband?" She said: "Go away, you decrepit old man." Then Abraham said: "When he comes home, tell your husband: Change the door of your house." Now when Ismael came [home] he perceived the odor of his father; he questioned his wife, and she told him what she had been instructed. On hearing this, Ismael divorced his wife, and took another as far as a seventh. This one begged Abraham to descend from his donkey so she might anoint his feet. He put down one foot, said [Muḥammad] and placed it on the rock, and the rock yielded to his feet. The other foot he did not put down from his beast. He had sworn to Sarah that he would not dismount, as she feared that he might be with Hagar. This is the fable of Mahmet. And he ordered that they should (come) there from every region to worship, and said [that] they should go around the rock on one foot and say: "Lbayk', lbayk'," and as if replying to someone: "*Ay, ay, awas, awas.*"

Crossing the valley they slaughter an animal, then mounting a beast they flee as far as the hill of Mak'ay. And if in their flight some clothing falls or comes out of place, no one is allowed to look behind. Running between the two rocks which they call Safa and Emra, they go from rock to rock seven times without pausing, and throw stones. They say Mahmet did so, and so taught. But running on one foot is because of the single footprint. The slaying of an animal in the valley and the fleeing, they say, (are because) Mahmet offered sacrifice to all the demons so that they might show him visions, but when they appeared to him he fled. The going round the two rocks and throwing stones (are because) their rocks were worshipped before the idols. And while Mahmet was worshipping according to his custom a mad dog attacked him, and he threw stones at it; so he ordered the same thing to be done. Snakes and serpents are not killed because they were worshipped by them. And the slaughter of a dog, they say, is because when Mahmet died they did not wish to bury him, expecting that he would rise up on the third day like our Lord Jesus Christ, and dogs devoured his face. When they realized this, they slew the dogs, and ordered the same to be done on the same month (of each year).

He taught (them) to say God is one and that no one is companion to him, and Mahmet is his servant. As for those who say, on the word of

some Jew, that the prophets spoke about Mahmet as they did about Christ—in this regard they say that Isaiah saw two people riding (one) on a donkey, (the other) on a camel. And one day, suddenly he magic Mahmet disappeared and a little later reappeared, saying: “Peace be upon you and the mercy and grace of God.” In astonishment they said: “Whence do you come, and what is this new greeting of yours, and which god’s grace did you bring to us?” He said: “God took me to Mak’ay, to the house of my father Abraham, and explained his wishes. And tomorrow he will send us laws.” Taking a heifer that had given birth, on the public square he separated it from her calf; then he wrote whatever he wished, fixed it to her horns, and sent it to the desert with (trusted) friends. He ordered it to be released the next day, while he himself remained (behind) and gathered the crowd. The cow arrived mooing and sweating, and bursting into the crowd, sought the calf. He ordered it to be seized, and taking the piece of paper, kissed it and said it came from God.

Up today it is written about this at the beginning of the Quran: *Surat al-Bak’ara*, which is: laws of the cow. And he ordered (them) to pray five times with ablutions, and instead of trumpets of Israel, to summon (the faithful) from high up, taking as witness (the saying): “Go up on the mountain of Sion, O evangelist.” And they call the crier *Modin*, which is “he who bears (witness) to the faith.” And the putting of the finger in the ear, they say, is because one hears with the ear, willy-nilly. And he called Christ the Word and Spirit. And they say that he performed a miracle: bringing the moon down, they say, he divided it into four parts; then making it whole again, he sent it back to heaven.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, Kirakos Ganjakec’i related in his *History* that in the year 618 there appeared a man called Mahmet, who had borrowed beliefs from heresiarchs Cerinthus and Arius. He gave details about Muḥammad’s early career as a merchant, his being from the Qurayš tribe, his epileptic seizures, and claims to have had visions and received divine messages. He also mentions the meeting with the Arian monk “*Sergis Bxira*”, who taught some of the “laws of Moses” and induced him into thinking that he could lead his own people in the path of the Arianist faith. For the first time, there is an account of the circumstances of Muḥammad’s migration to Medinah or Yathrib. Kirakos also talks about the tribal conflicts and the chaos in the city and about the invitation by the Jewish tribes to Muḥammad as arbitrator and restorer of order. Kirakos also discussed the 652 and 654 Armenian-Islamic treatises in his own versions and as Samvêl had done earlier on, again mentioned the so-called “Prophet’s Oath” to the Armenians:³⁴

Mahmet prevented the sword, and made the whole world obey to him by the power of advice only. He signed a permanent oath that the Armenian world maintain Christianity freely. . . . In fact, he sold them back their own faith. . . . He required four *dirhams* from each house three *modii* [about 30 kg.] of sifted wheat, one hempen rope and a gauntlet. It was ordered to levy no taxes from priests, *azats* and cavalrymen.³⁵

At the beginning of a manuscript (of the seventeenth century) of the *Anonymous History of Pseudo-Šapuh Bagratuni*, there is a section titled “History of the Birth and Upbringing of the Anti-Christ Mahamat.”³⁶ The sources, authorship and dates of this text remain unknown. It has two novelties: the first is about Bhira who, having cured Muḥammad of his demon-possession, plans to “discover” him as a “prophet” to assure his acceptance. This “ruse of Bhira” is unique in Armenian sources. The second is the Persian background of Muḥammad, who is said to have been born near Rayy, but fled from the Sassanians and built Baghdad. In conclusion to his article, Thomson says: “. . . it is perhaps strange that the Armenians did not develop a more precise and coherent understanding of the religion of their enemies or engage in dialogue with them as did the Byzantine Greeks and the Syriac speaking Christians.”³⁷

During the last decade of the fourteenth century and at the end of an era, the cycle of Mahmat’s legend/s reached saturation and was absorbed in the polemical-apologetic arsenal of Grigor Tat’ewac’i and his student Matt’ēos Ĵulayec’i (specifically three texts of different levels and size written between 1393 and 1398). This is the subject of the next chapter, but in order to complete the themes of this chapter, a reference will be made to the Mahmet of Grigor Tat’ewac’i.

Despite obvious differences between the formal and intellectual standards, there are very close similarities between the texts of Grigor and Matt’ēos. It is very probable that the ideas expounded in these texts were part of the instruction in the monastic schools, where major Syrian and Latin polemical texts were available. As mentioned, in style, methods, and themes these texts are very similar to them. The images of Muḥammad as depicted by these two authors are not different from the protagonist of the Mahmet Legend. This time around they deployed the negative image of this Mahmet in their polemical strategies. In other words, they wanted to demonstrate that Islam was inferior to Christianity because of the low credibility and the shameful conduct of its founder. The legendary Mahmet as “false prophet” (*sut margarē*)

is taken for granted. His teachings have no credibility because he is a brutal, licentious, and villainous world conqueror. Similar to the style of the Karshuni, the plan is to re-tell the story of Mahmet to reveal the “truth” about him and his teachings.

In his discussion of the sixth “fallacy” (*molorut‘iwn*) of the Muslims, Grigor directly accused Muḥammad of acting not like a prophet but like a true conqueror and of boasting (*mecabanut‘iwn*) that “the world was created for his sake.” Another indication against the prophethood of Muḥammad, in his opinion, is his failure to perform *karamat* or miracles (*oč‘ arar karamat*). The fifth counter-indication of Mahmet’s not being a prophet is the absence of any novelty in his teachings but borrowed ideas from everyone.³⁸ Parallel to his so-called refutations and critique of fallacies, and as background to his reminder of the Prophet’s Oath to Armenians, Grigor gives an account of the life of Muḥammad, almost repeating Kirakos Ganjakec’i. These themes will be elaborated in the next chapter but in order to complete this section, below is a verbatim of this section in Grigor’s *Against the Tačiks* in my translation:

And this is his story, in the Armenian year of 99 (99+551=640/641) and the tenth year of the incumbency of Catholicos Ezr (630–641) [there appeared] someone called Mahmet from the Islamelites, son of Abdlay. He knew little about the Laws of Moses, and had been a student of a hermit called Bxira, from the sect of Arius [residing] at the desert [*anapat* means desert and monastery] of Sinai, and this man [Mahmet] believed in the sect/teachings of Arius. He said that the kingdom of heaven was physical, and that after the resurrection there would be food and marriage. He taught laws that contradicted both the Old and New Laws. He uttered many worthless and ludicrous things to his people. They considered him lawgiver, messenger and commander of the Tačiks in the Islamic year of 20 (AD 642). After much slaughtering of and dominating over multitudes, this Mahmet prevented the sword and by persuasive advice subjugated the greater part of the world. And with a permanent oath he sealed a pact [*murhak*] for the Armenians, which is now called Great Decree [*mec manšur*] that they may hold their Christianity freely and [thus] he sold [vačaireac’] to them their own faith. From each household he took four *drams* [*dirhams*], three marzans of barley, one horse-feeding bag [*jiatoprak*], a hempen rope, and a gauntlet. He ordered that no taxes be collected from the freemen, cavalry, and clergy. During the twenty years after Mahmet, and until the [Muslim] year 38 [?], *Pupakr* ruled for twenty years [Abū Bakr al-Šiddiq, 632–634] and *Ot‘man* [Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān] twelve, from 644–656, [he missed ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, 634–644]. After him, the other Mahmet, ruled in his name

and in his tradition, as prince and messenger. It is told that Catholicos Lord Sahak [III Jorap'orec'i, 677–703] went to him, but passed away on his way and was taken in his coffin to him [the other Mahmet, or Muḥammad Ibn Marwan, see Volume One, 68–69]. The latter gave the Little *manšur* to the Armenian people. In the same manner as the first Mahmet, [he] released the priesthood, the nobility and the cavalry of all taxes and allowed them to maintain their faith freely. This much is sufficient for this subject.³⁹

III. Some “Problematicues” of the Armenian Mahmet

At the beginning of this chapter the “problematicues” of the Armenian Mahmet were addressed in three questions: Who was the Armenian Mahmet and what were his teachings? How close was this image to traditional biographies and the Qur'ānic Muḥammad? Why did legend replace text for centuries in Armenian intellectual culture?

The legendary Mahmet is obviously not the Qur'ānic Muḥammad, nor that of the *Sirah* literature, as the reader may see in Chapter 1 of this section about the life of Muḥammad. The Jewish connection made in all the accounts was a shortcut to his opportunistic nature as well as to his political genius and success. The other shortcut this time to his heterodoxy was the Arian connection through the Baḥirā legend. Armenian authors dismissed Mahmet's teaching as a version of Arianism and not worth their consideration. The personality of the founder of Islam, or the protagonist of the Mahmet legends, is a shrewd but not too valiant and somehow primitive and hedonistic adventurer. A native of a desert-land on the peripheries of great civilizations, as well as Jewish and Christian worlds, he made the most of the ideological chaos, social unease in his own country, and conquered the “world.” The Cycle of Mahmet Legends—of which the Karshuni was a significant part—was particularly convenient for Armenian authors in their strategies against the “false prophet” and his man-made, fictitious, and legalistic cult. This is the reason why instead of text, legend proved to be not only sufficient but also beneficial. Based on the polemical works of Arab Christians, Greek and Latin polemical literature was translated and widely used. It provided some specific information, which otherwise the authors did not have access to. Grigor and Matt'ēos, and generally in the style of scholastic texts brought in by the Latin missionaries and Unitarians and Arab Christian polemics, claimed to demonstrate the “irrationality” of the Islamic tenets by “rational” arguments. In addition, the personality and the career of Muḥammad were regularly brought in to discredit his claims and teachings.

The alliance of Armenian sectarians with the Muslims was a very significant factor in dealing with both political and doctrinal Islam and the legendary Mahmet turned into an “argument” of sorts to deal even with this alliance. As Grigor said, the heretics of his time were the “remnants” of the ancient Arianists, so was Mahmet, in turn an Arianist and a relic of the past. The problem of Muslim Armenians of the Mongol period—mostly voluntary converts—was washed away by the same accusation of Arianism and hedonism. As shall be discussed in the next chapter, parallel to their arguments against the Tačiks, Grigor and Matṭēos still kept the legendary Mahmet as a fact beyond suspicion to discredit Islam as an alternative religious culture and ethics. Even after the Middle Ages, no new material was added to the Cycle and no interest was detected in learning about the religion of the rulers, who were now the Ottoman Turks, the Persians, Arabs, and Kurds. As mentioned, the first translation from Arabic appeared only at the beginning of the twentieth century, and scholarship has still not concerned itself with the Armenian experience with Islam.

Notes

1. “Ays ē Gir Orinac’ Hagarac’woc’ kam Ismaelac’woc’, or Koč’i Luran.” Matenadaran, Ms #3109, 5a-231a.
2. “Hay Jeṛagir Luran mi I Hndiks, T ‘argmanut’eamb Step’anos Vardapeti llovec’woy.” *Bazmavēp* (1924): 66–169, and 204–207.
3. For this subject the following are indirect yet useful references: Yakob Anas-ean, “Mahmedism/Islam and the Christian Tax-Payers” [Mahmetakanutiwnē ew K’ristoneay Harkatunerē], *Handēs Amsoreay* (1980): 35–44. M. L. G. Minasean, “The Decrees Granted to Armenians by Prophet Mohamad and Head-Amīr ‘Ali” [Mohamat Margarēi ew Ali Amirapeti kołmic’ Hayerin Trwac Hrovartaknerē], *Hask* (May–June, 1972): 194–96.
4. Papken Guleserian, *Islamē Hay Matenagrut’ean mēj*: A. Grigori Tat’ewac’woy *Ėnnēm Tajkac’*, B. I K’asunē K’alacu [Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature: A. Against the Tačiks by Grigor Tat’ewac’i, B. Excerpts from the K’asun], (Vienna: Mxit’arists, 1930).
5. Grigor Tat’ewac’i, *Girk’ Harc’manc’ Eric’s Eraneal Srboy Hōrn Meroy Grigori Tat’ewac’uyn* [Book of Questions], (Istanbul: Yohannu Vartabed Press, 1729).
6. Robert W. Thomson, “Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam in Armenian Literary Tradition,” In *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity*, (London: Varorium, 1994), 829–58. For the Armenian translation of the Karshuni see R. W. Thomson, “Armenian Variations on the Bahira Legend,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979–1980): 884–95.
7. See S. Gero, “The Legend of the Monk Baḥīrā—The Cult of the Cross, and Iconoclasm,” In *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam—VIIe—VIIIe Siècles*, (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1992).

8. See ed. M. O. Darbinean-Melikean, *Istoriia anonimnogo povestvovatelju, Pseudo-Shabuh Bagratuni*, (Erevan: Izd-vo AN Arm. SSR, 1971), 43.
9. See Sebēos, *Patmut'wn Sebēosi Episkoposi i Herakln* [History of Heraclius by Bishop Sebēos], (Tbilisi: N. Ałanean Press, 1913), Ch. 30. See Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 830–31.
10. See Lewond, *Patmut'wn Lewonday Meci Vardapeti Hayoc'* [History of Armenians by the Great Vardapet Lewond], (St. Petersburg: N. Skorokhodov Press, 1887), Ch. 1.
11. Yovhan Ōjnec'i, "Norin Ėnddēm Pawlikeanc'" [Against the Paulicians], In *Yovhannu Imastaseri Awc'nec'woy Matenagrut'wnk'* [Writings of the Philosopher Yovhan Ōjnec'i], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1833), 34.
12. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 832.
13. T'ovma Arcruni, *Patmut'wn Tann Acruneac'* [History of the Arcruni House]. (Tbilisi: N. Ałanean Press, 1917), vol. II, 4 (14); Also see Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 833–39.
14. See T'ovma, *Patmut'wn*, II, 4(14).
15. *Yovhannu Kat'olikosi Drasxanakertec'woy Patmut'wn Hayoc'* (Tbilisi: 1912), 81.
16. See Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movsēs Dasxuranc'i*. Translated by C. J. F. Dowsett, (Oxford: London Oriental Series 8, 1961). Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 840.
17. See Grigor Magistros, *Grigor Magistrosi T't'erē*. [Epistles] ed. K. Kostaneantc' (Alexandrapol: Gēworg Sanyanc'i Press, 1910).
18. See Dadoyan, The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World-Paradigms of interaction—Vol. I, The Arab Period in Aemenia—Seventh to Eleventh Centuries, Ch. 2, V.
19. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 842.
20. Samvėl Anec'i, *Hawak'munk'*. [Collected Works], (Vałaršapat: 1893), 78 (44); Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 842–43.
21. About the taxes see: H. A. Manandean, *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade*, Translated by N. G. Garsoian (Lisbon: Gulbenkian Foundation, 1963), 130ff.
22. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 843. Also see Seta B. Dadoyan, "The Chronicle of Michael the Syrian and the Armenian Version (1248): A Textual Comparison." *Hask Hayagitakan Taregirk' X* (2003–2006): 257–75.
23. Guleserian, *Islamē*, 189–22. The text is on 194–222.
24. Mxit'ar Anec'i, *Mxit'aroy Anec'woy Patmut'wn* [History of Mxit'ar Anec'i], (St. Petersburg: 1879), the Appendix.
25. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 845.
26. Mxitar Anec'i, *History*, Ch. 25 and 26, 35–43.
27. "I K'ašunēn Kałacu," in Guleserian, *Islamē*, 194, 196.
28. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 846–53.
29. The title of Ch. 25 in Armenian: "Vasn Araspelac' Anawrēn Mahmeti ew norin stut'ean, zor Xaytarakē norin Ašakertn."
30. For the Armenian version of the *Infancy Gospel*, see *Ankanon Girk' II* [Out of Canon Writings] (Venice: St. Lazar, 1898), 1–312.
31. From Mxit'ar Anec'i, *History*, Ch. 25; Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 846–59.

32. Vardan Vardapet (Arewelc'i), *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean* (Historical Collection], (Venice: St. Lazar, 1862). Ch. 34. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 254–55. In French translation: J. Muyldermans, *La domination arabe en Arménie* [Arab Domination in Armenia]. (Louvain: Peeters, 1927).
33. See note 27 above.
34. See Note 18 for Samvêl's version of the "Oath."
35. Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *Hayoc' Patmut'iwn* [History of Armenians]. Edited by Varag Aṛak'ëlean, (Erevan: 1982), 55.
36. *Patmut'iwn Ananun Zrucagri Karcece'al Šapuh Bagratuni* [Anonymous History of Shapuh Bagratuni]. ed. M. H. Darbinean-Melikean (Erevan: 1971). For the Armenian translation see. Thomson, "Armenian Variations on the Bahira Legend"; "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 256.
37. Thomson, "Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam," 257.
38. Grigor, *Against the Tačiks*, 115–16. For full bibliography see next chapter.
39. Ibid., 120–23.

Grigor and Matt'ēos: Texts and Polemical Strategies

I. Three Polemical Texts in 1390s by Grigor Tat'ewac'i and Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i

The first quasi-academic polemical treatise against the Muslims was written in 1393 and titled “Various Responses to the Questions of the Infidels by Mattēos Vardapet, Requested by Abisołom the Pious Great Lord of Širyan” [*Matt'ēos Vardapeti vasn Harc'manc' Anorinac' Zanzan Patasxanin zor Xndreal Barepaštn Abisołom Mec Tanutērn Širyanay*].¹ About ten years later, Matt'ēos wrote another sermon called *There Arose False Prophets* [*Yarec'an sut Margarēk'*].² In 1397, Grigor Tat'ewac'i, his teacher, and the director of the monastic school of Tat'ew, wrote a more scholarly and extensive treatise titled *Against the Muslims* [*Ĕnddēm Tačkak'*]³ as a chapter in his monumental *Book of Questions* [*Girk' Harc'manc'*].⁴

One of the most copied and familiar books of the late medieval period in Armenia, the *Book of Questions*, was first published in Ottoman Istanbul in 1729; but to avoid censorship, without the chapter on Islam. In 1905, the then editor of *Luys Ecclesiological Weekly* (*Loys Ekelec'iagitakan Šapatat'ert'*) of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, Bishop (later on Catholicos) Papken Guleserian, accidentally found a manuscript of the *Book of Questions* in the Armenian National Library of Istanbul, which did have the chapter titled *Against the Muslims* (*Ĕnddēm Tačkak'*). This rare text could not be published at the time, and Guleserian finally published it in Vienna, as *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature and Excerpts from the Kashun* (*Islamē Hay Grakanut'ean mēj ew I K'ašunēn K'alacu*), with an introduction, notes, the text of the Karshuni, and the version of Mxit'ar Anec'i. In the introduction, he wrote that the plan was to study and publish all texts which referred to Islam in medieval Armenian literature. But precisely

in 1930, he was appointed co-adjutor (1930–1936) to Catholicos Sahak II Khabayan of Cilicia and indeed he was the first to set foot in the new premises of the See at Antelias, north of Beirut, in the late summer of that year. The project was interrupted.

In 1919, like thousands of other intellectuals at Istanbul, Guleserian too departed leaving all his papers behind. He settled at the St. Yakob Monastery of Jerusalem, and resumed his project to publish Grigor's *Against the Muslims*. To his great surprise, he found several copies of this chapter and selected three in particular. The best copy was dated 1413, less than two years after the death of Grigor in 1411. It was complete and as Guleserian says, prepared under his supervision. This is the manuscript used for the Vienna edition, it is Jerusalem St. Yakob Ms. 1155. Two other manuscripts are also used but in the footnotes, they are Jerusalem St. Yakob Ms. 1546 and 827.⁵

As discussed in the previous chapter, as far as the life and teachings of Muḥammad were concerned, these polemical texts remained within the peripheries of the Mahmet Cycle of Legends. The Muslims were also referred to as *aylazgik* (or "other/different people"). The term *aylazgi* was the subdued form for Tačik. As far as the Church was concerned, only at the end of the fourteenth century, when under the Mongols voluntary conversions proliferated, Islam had to be dealt with as an alternative pervasive culture. Grigor and Matt'ēos tried to conceptualize it indirectly through polemics. There are very close similarities between the texts of Grigor and his pupil Matt'ēos and it seems that the ideas expounded in these texts were in fact part of the instruction in the monastic schools, where major Syrian and Latin polemical texts were available. In style, format, and themes, these texts are part of that literature with a gap of almost five hundred years. The novelty was in the initiative to address the issue at that time.

During the fourteenth century and following their conversion at the beginning of the century, the Mongols accelerated religious persecutions and many converted under compulsion as well as for interest. Otherwise, for centuries, Islamic sympathies and alliances of individuals and factions, as well as voluntary conversions, were common in the entire Armenian habitat. Conversion was a shortcut to power, position, and wealth, in addition to avoidance of taxes. In order to keep and maintain their estates, property, titles, and rights, even some from the traditional nobility (such as the Orbeleans and Prošeans), the lords of Siwnik' made political conversions to Islam (at least temporarily). They knew Arabic and Persian and appreciated these cultures. Many kept

their Christian names to the end of the fifteenth century. In addition to the old aristocracy, and after the latter dwindled, smaller or lesser lords emerged known as *tanutêrs*. There were converts among them too.⁶ In the village of Orotn in Siwnik', for example, inscriptions on tombs of Islamized Armenians indicate to these circumstances during the Mongol period.⁷

Even though Grigor and Matt'ëos address the "Tačiks," their intended audience were the Armenians who knew very little about the doctrines of either Christianity or Islam. Heterodox Armenians and converts too were special targets, because they were deviations or desertions from within the Armenian house. Many lived in Muslim societies and assimilated cultural Islam and the folklore of all the Muslim people. Conversions were beneficial, both for position and for rural people to avoid high taxes and remain on their land. In the literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there are many references by clergy to moral and religious "degeneration" and "decadence." The adoption of Islamic ways was part of their concerns.

Grigor and Matt'ëos had a double strategy. First, they wanted to show that Christianity withstood what they called objections/questions of the Tačiks by "rational" argumentation. Knowledge of both Christianity and Islam was the "arsenal," and rational arguments the weapons. Next, they wanted to instruct the public in the correct doctrines of their own superior faith. Obviously, the initiative of both authors was overdue. The low credibility of Mahmet the founder, even the so-called inferior morality of Islam, did not seem to affect choices on the ground. Individuals and trends made their own choices in accordance with their requirements of survival and/or interest. As of the seventh century, conversions happened back and forth. In addition, the indigenous syncretism of the Near Eastern peoples was a favorable factor and milieu. Many trends entertained mixed beliefs and practices, anyway. Many also welcomed the rich and colorful Islamic folklore, the arts, and their ways. Almost all the Armenian sectarians were pro-Muslim and heterodoxy was a major paradigm of interaction, as demonstrated throughout this book.

Since no writings by pro-Muslim Armenian sectarians survived, and the Church controlled intellectual culture, the ideological links between Islam and the sects can/will never be clearly defined. Indigenous Near Eastern syncretism has always been a powerful factor. Among all heterodox trends, adoptionistic Christology and the rejection of the trinity, sacraments, religious hierarchy, also the maintenance of some pagan

and Zoroastrian customs and beliefs continued beyond the fourteenth century to modern times. S. Vryonis rightly observes that the idea that the two religions remained separate is inaccurate and syncretism is proof. Furthermore, as repeatedly mentioned in this study, the opinions and the expressed attitudes of the illiterate masses toward Islam were unrecorded except in epic and popular poetry, fragments of which survived.⁸ Despite the official attitudes, people did apostatize and by early sixteenth century, Asia Minor was predominantly Muslim.⁹

II. The Role of Late Medieval Monastic Schools in Eastern Armenia

One of the factors that contributed to the appearance of apologetic/polemical literature was the improvement of learning in the monastic schools and the introduction of western literature through the Catholic missionaries and the *Unit'ors* or Unitarians (who preached union with the Catholic Church). Often referred to as "universities" (*hamalsaran*), these schools opened during relative peace and prosperity under the Zak'arids¹⁰ at the monasteries of Tat'ew, Glajor, Gelard, Ani, Halbat, Sanahin, Halarcin, Gošavank', Xor Virap, and Xoranašat (in Siwnik' and north of it on the mainland, more or less the present Republic). The monasteries at this time contributed to the organization of education and raised the standards of literary culture among the clergy. The curriculum was similar to what is known as the seven liberal arts. The *trivium* included grammar, rhetoric, and logic; the *quadrivium* covered arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Works of Aristotle, Porphyry, Dawit' Anhalt', Movsēs Xorenac'i, Anania Širakac'i, Grigor Magistros, and Yovhannēs Erznkac'i were read. The curriculum also included some texts of Abelard and Aquinas in particular (in Armenian translations), brought in by Dominican and Franciscan missionaries, who had arrived earlier with the Crusaders. The Catholics had many sympathizers and converts among the clergy and the populace.

Despite the unfavorable light in which traditional Armenian historians presented them, the Unit'ors and the Armenian-Catholic religious orders played a very unique and positive role in introducing medieval western thought into Armenia, both in Cilicia and in the monastic schools on the mainland. After the first quarter of the thirteenth century, the Catholic school of the Monastery of Kīna produced a great number of translations by Yovhan Kīnec'i, Bartholomeo da Bologna (the Latin abbot of the Monastery of Maragha), and Petrus of Aragonia.¹¹ During the last two years of the fourteenth century, a papal decree

put all the Catholic institutions under the direct control of Rome and here the Franciscans were favored.¹² The School of Corcor placed a number of Franciscan scholars like Zak'aria, Yovhan Corcorec'i, Israēl Vardapet, and Fra Pontus.¹³ This literature was also available and read at anti-Unit'orist and anti-Cilician schools of Glajor and Tat'ew, which constantly claimed to be the guardians of Armenian orthodoxy and native traditions.

III. Mongol Times in Siwnik' and Polemical Strategies

Around 1380, Turkic Mongol Tamerlane (or Timur i-Lang, or Timur Lang, 1336–1405) began his campaigns into Armenia and various parts of Asia Minor. The region from the Caspian to the Black Sea was devastated by the “southern fire” (in reference to northwestern Iran and Atrpatakan through which Mongols penetrated into Armenia), as Matt'ëos puts it.¹⁴ After the consecutive falls of the Zak'arids and the Prošeans, the second half of the fourteenth century saw widespread destruction.¹⁵ In the colophon of a Bible he copied at Tat'ew in the year 1407, Matt'ëos described his times as “bitter and difficult,” but he also expressed relief, because:

... the arrowmen of T'imur disappeared and on the throne of Atrpatakan (between the Caspian Sea and Lake Urmia) rose the Qara Qoyunlu Qara Yūsuf. The latter twice fought with the grandson of the evil beast T'imur . . . and with divine providence and Christ our redeemer, the Armenian world was saved.¹⁶

Indeed, after the fall of Tamerlane's descendants and the arrival of the Qara Qoyunlu Muḥammad (1378–1388), followed by Qara Yūsuf (1388–1400, 1405–1420), the Armenians hoped to find some peace, but were soon disillusioned.¹⁷ In the colophon of *K'nnut'iwn Gorcoc' Arak'eloc'* (1410–1411), Matt'ëos described Qara Yūsuf as just another Tamerlane. He was also unhappy about the cultural wasteland in Armenia. No one was left, he said, to succeed the “great sages” (meaning Esayi Nč'ec'i, Yovhan Orotneč'i, Grigor Tat'ewac'i). He complained of the intrigues, treachery, rivalries, and the sloth of “fake brothers” in the clergy.¹⁸ There is little novelty in these testimonies of Matt'ëos, except the scale of religious persecutions and conversions, both compulsory and voluntary. In his *Vasn K'arozut'ean Banin* he wrote:

The *aylazgi* tyrants [Muslim Mongols] . . . are human in form . . . similar to us in mind and soul, but have the heart of wild beasts. They ruthlessly rob and torture us and inflict harm, . . . they deprive us of

our faith, abuse and persecute, and by exterminating us altogether they think they are serving God.¹⁹

Matt'ēos also painted a very dark image of the Armenian leadership of his time. Both the clergy and princes, who were supposed to lead and assist the people at times of crises, he said, instead were involved in petty quarrels and the exploitation of the people they were supposed to protect and help. In the southwest, the Cilician kingdom fell in 1375, and everywhere the Church was under both external and internal pressures.²⁰ But in the midst of chaos, the monastic schools of Glajor and Tat'ew prospered and the role of pro-Latin scholars was a major factor. But some, like Matt'ēos himself, were not too happy about the assimilation and appreciation of the western element, he complained, that:

... it has become a national custom to seek and appreciate the wisdom of foreign scholars, to read their works, and neglecting their own, even though the latter too are the fruits of hard effort.²¹

The period also saw a sudden rise in taxes, and since Muslims were exempted, conversions increased among the peasants and the populace in general, as mentioned. Those who attempted to migrate were brought back by force. In the cities the situation was different, interactions were unavoidable, and city dwellers, such as the Armenians of Erzinka, genuinely welcomed cultural Islam. Matt'ēos criticized Armenians who adopted Mongol, Turkish, and Arabic names such as Alam-Khat'un, Yaxši Bek, Ałbuła, Ardla, Damur-Buła.²² As always and more so during the later Mongol period, carrying Arabic and Persian names was fashionable. It was a sign of a higher culture, as it was and still is the case of Armenians everywhere, who adopt western names and customs.²³ Matt'ēos also regretted the loss of faith among the common people, some of whom, he said, even cursed and despised the Holy Scriptures, perhaps the Church too. Some wealthy Armenians known as *khojas* managed to become part of the Mongol and Turkmen administrations, and functioned as financiers, contractors, landowners, state officials, ambassadors, and translators.²⁴ Matt'ēos has an intriguing presentation of the social-economic classes in the cities at the time: the vagrant and jobless who drifted from one city to another (most probably the *manuks*, *fityān*, *'ayyarūn*), those who subsisted on occasional means, hired laborers, craftsmen-artisans, messengers (like *dallaks* and ambassadors), crooks and thieves, judges and lawyers, scholars and wise men,

clergy and members of the religious institutions, and people of power and authority.²⁵ In general, Matt'ëos was deeply disappointed at urban lifestyles and attacked the culture of the urban male population and obviously urban youth coalitions or brotherhoods. He said that every day after work these “lewd and arrogant” men spent their evening in drinking parties. They were entertained by poet-singers (*gusan*), female dancers, and musicians. Their “loathsome” culture was nothing but a legacy of the heretical sects (*herjwacolk'*) known for their hedonism.²⁶ He also made some comments about affinities between the heresies and morally decadent classes in cities; hence, the moral inferiority of both heresies.

IV. Grigor, Matt'ëos, and Their Work

Very briefly stated, these were the circumstances in which Grigor, the most prominent scholar of his age, and his student Matt'ëos, wrote the first and only Armenian-polemical text. This text belonged to and reflected the intellectual tradition of the Monastery and of the School of Tat'ew. Like many among the eastern clergy, they saw themselves as defenders of the Armenian Apostolic faith against the Latin Unitarians, the sectarians (*herjwacolk'*), and the Muslims. As of the twelfth century and after the arrival of the Crusaders and Catholic missionaries, the debates between the Cilicians and the eastern *vardapets* accelerated. The Latinophilia of the Cilician princes caused discomfort not only on the mainland but in Cilicia itself, as discussed in Volume Two. In 1441, thirty years after the death of Tat'ewac'i, these differences culminated in the revival of Ējmiacin, a millennium after being almost deserted and the election of another co-catholicos, while Catholicos Grigor IX Musabekeanc' (1439–1451) of all Armenians was still active at his See in Sis.

Grigor, rather, Saint Grigor Tat'ewac'i was born around 1330 in Vayoc' Jor in southern Armenia, and studied under Yovhan Orotneac'i (1313/15–1386/88) at the Monastery of Ałberc' or Glajor in his home province. In 1373, he settled in Tat'ew in the same province with his teacher. After the latter's death, he succeeded him as the director of the monastic school. Grigor was a prolific writer, theologian, philosopher, administrator, church official, poet, musician, painter, and an outspoken defender of the Armenian apostolic faith.

As a philosopher, Grigor was the last of six late-medieval Aristotelians who were identified as Armenian Nominalists (by Soviet Armenian scholars not without reason). These were Yovhannēs Sarkawag Imastasēr (d. 1129), Vahram Rabuni (second half of the thirteenth

century), Nersēs Mšec'i (d. 1284), Esayi Nč'ec'i (1260/5–1338), and Yovhan Orotneč'i (1313/15–1386/88). Grigor and his predecessors were basically moderate Aristotelians. It is difficult to hold the view (of some historians of Armenian philosophy) that nominalism was adopted by the Armenian Church to justify its claims for its independence from the Catholic Church. As of the fifth century, Aristotle was the single most important factor in the formation and development of Armenian philosophy. Throughout the Middle Ages, the *Categories* of Aristotle and the *Isagoge* of Porphyry were taken as references and often commented on. Together with the original texts in translation, these commentaries were used as textbooks in the monastic schools. The Unit'o'rs were Thomists and as far as their method and Aristotelianism were concerned, Orotneč'i and Grigor had no disputes with them. On the contrary, they encouraged their students to copy translations of the works of Aquinas. Grigor seems to be familiar with other Latin and scholastic authors too.²⁷

These late medieval Armenian authors maintained the Aristotelian tradition and abstained from indulging into areas of obvious conflict with Christian dogma. They developed a peculiar doctrine of double truth based on the rationality of revealed truth. Revelation and physical reality were seen as distinct areas. The truths of revelation being of a higher status could only be reached by faith. Otherwise, nature and everything else were objects of natural cognition, which included sense perception, reason, and memory. Grigor persistently argued against radical rationalism in religion and natural theology. He said, that “while natural cognition might go astray and fall into skepticism, faith never errs concerning its object, the Truth.”²⁸ In the *Book of Questions* he often pointed to the limitations of natural cognition, and in particular the truths of religion.²⁹ He divided knowledge into practical and theoretical. The latter served the former. “Wisdom is like a lamp, good deeds are its oil,” he said.³⁰ Like most medieval Armenian authors, Grigor's theory of knowledge maintained some Platonic elements, but in his theory of the universals, he rejected the Platonic position and insisted that ideas/forms were conceived only through the mind and were maintained by it.³¹ According to him, at birth the mind is like a clear mirror where things of the world are reflected.³² As a “blank disk” or a “clean parchment,” it receives the imprint of whatever it is exposed to.³³ In the act of cognition, the knowing subject and the known object unite.³⁴ In the question of the universals, Grigor took only broadly nominalistic positions when he saw the particulars or individuals prior

to universals. He argued that if the ideas or forms were taken to be prior to particular objects, it would follow that objects followed ideas and not vice versa. Because, he said,

... as footprints follow footsteps and shadows bodies, ideas follow the objects that they represent. It is therefore clear, that the idea does not impart reality to the object, it is the object that produces ideas in us, thus giving them an intelligible reality.³⁵

Following the tradition of Armenian Aristotelians, Grigor's psychology too was a modified form of Aristotle's elaborate theory. According to him, the soul undergoes three phases of development. The first is the vegetative and imperfect stage, the second is the intermediate or the sensitive stage, and the third is the rational stage through which man is accomplished. However, even though the complete or perfect man is defined through the rational soul, the human individual is an organic combination of the sensible and the intelligible.³⁶ In addition to sensation and reason, he proposed memory as a third faculty. According to him, these three "powers" were located in separate niches, as it were, in the brain. While,

... general sensibility is devoted to the knowledge of that which is present ... reason grasps the eternal, and memory retains the past. Reason refers to the senses when it needs the knowledge of the present and to the memory for that of the past.³⁷

A. Heresy in the Triangle of Reason, Social Norms, and Religion—The Neir or Antichrist

Even though Grigor's rationalism stopped at the limits of faith, his epistemology still laid the basis for his polemical arguments.³⁸ According to him, attempts to apply reason on revealed truths led to heresy, never the truth. In most explicit terms he wrote,

Heresy follows natural reason and orthodoxy [right belief] faith. ...³⁹ The heretic is just an extreme rationalist who accepts only that which his own mind molds and formulates. ...⁴⁰ Natural reason being the only source of knowledge and truth, the heretic simply refrains from adopting the dictates of faith, like the Cross, and the Crucifixion⁴¹ ... and all that is not intelligible for him.⁴²

Thus the rejection of the Holy Cross, the Trinity, liturgy, and the Holy Sacraments was the negative result of attempts to apply reason

to religion. Consequently, in matters of faith, rationalism became the equivalent of rebellion against God, he said. He called the rationalists “rebels,” “Neṛ”s, or Antichrists, who ended up in heresy if not total blasphemy. He explained who/what the Neṛ is:

The Neṛ is he who is against the Cross, church, worship, holy relics, fasting, and others. Who is the Neṛ? He is simply the Devil. He is he who preaches lawlessness (*anōrinut’iwn*), and is a satellite of the Devil, [like him] filled with evil, fraud and deceit. He is an infidel who refuses both the natural and Biblical laws.⁴³

Again, like most other medieval authors—with the exception of Grigor Narekac’i—Grigor Tat’ewac’i was an extremely conservative figure and considered the existing feudal social-economic structure God-given, therefore just. He was keen on preserving the interests of the clergy and feudal nobility. This is why he brought the issue of heresy into the triangle of reason, religion, and social norms/structure.⁴⁴ For him, absolute power or dictatorship was the essence of governance.⁴⁵ If the social order was God-given, then just as power and wealth were right and just, poverty too was just and part of the same God-given system. Grigor even considered poverty as a source of virtue and the poor had to thank God for their condition and never complain. But still, he described the life of the peasant miserable and painful, because poverty made men meek and obedient, as the rulers wanted them to be.⁴⁶

In his view, the “classes of the sectarians” (*dask’ herjwacotac’*) were social dissidents too.⁴⁷ He was convinced that only absolute rulers were capable of ruling and their laws as well as means were justified.⁴⁸ Furthermore, placing social norms and practices on the level of divine commandments, he considered them legitimate and final. Objections to these criteria, or trespassing them, were the equivalents of rebellion and heresy, because rebels and dissidents were in turn heretics or *herjwacotk’*, as deviators from the right path as drawn by God and followed by the religious and secular authorities. As discussed in Volume One, from the fourth century Eustathian heretics in Cappadocia to the fourteenth century heretics in Siwnik’, the Armenian Church put no distinctions between religious and social laws. They sprang from a divine source and were guarded/applied by the Church and nobility. Consequently the Neṛ or the Antichrist was anyone who preached disobedience to existing laws. He was an “outlaw” and a law-breaker, who chose to stand outside and against the system, or as Grigor describes,

against the age-old “good and true” religious and social norms and practices.⁴⁹ It is in this context that he considered love of physical pleasures and food, particularly among the poor—who could not afford them anyway—an aspect of heresy.⁵⁰

B. Matt'ēos Jūlayec'i—Life and Work

Born around the middle of the fourteenth century, Matt'ēos was from Jula in southwest Armenia, at the time a small but commercially active city on the river Araxes/Araz.⁵¹ He studied under Sargis Vardapet at the Monastery of Aprakuni, then Orotneč'i and Grigor at Tat'ew. Leading a rather vagrant lifestyle, he made journeys to Arčēš, Mokk', Xaç'enk', Ernjak, Karin, Sivās, even Constantinople. He then stayed at the Monastery of Alt'amar on Lake Van, where he wrote the *Questions of the Infidels*. He was at the Monastery of Tanjaparax near Tat'ew in 1393 and two years later he settled at Tat'ew.⁵² After the death of Grigor in 1409/1411 and by the latter's decision sometime earlier, Matt'ēos took over the directorship of the monastic school, always as a modest vardapet. He died just before 1422.⁵³

Concerning most matters, and Islam in particular, Grigor and Matt'ēos have identical ideas. The repertoire of themes and methods indicates to a corpus of reference texts of Arab and Latin polemical traditions that were available and taught in Tat'ew and other monastic schools. Their objective, as they both stated, was to instruct the public and arm them with rhetorical weapons against Muslims who put pressure on Christians. The question-response format was used by Arab Christians much earlier and with very rare exceptions, the so-called debates and Muslim adversaries were hypothetical. Matt'ēos, the less sophisticated of the two, formulated the questions or *harc'ums* as “accusations” of infidelity and blasphemy addressed by the Muslims to the Armenians. On his part, Grigor presented them as *molorut'iwns* or fallacies, confusions of the Muslims. His aim was to show that the Muslims were the true “blasphemers,” not the Christians, who were constantly accused of being infidels/blasphemers (*kuffār*, singular *kāfir*). In general, both authors advised their audience to have courage and knowledge in order to respond to accusations. “Do not appear to be ignorant,” said Grigor, “answer each and every one of their objections.”⁵⁴

V. The Texts and Polemical Strategies

In their arguments against Muslims, Grigor and Matt'ēos kept the negative image of the legendary Mahmet as the background of their

polemical strategies. They also took the Karshuni for granted but kept it on a margin as a ready reference. Even re-telling the Baḥīrā legend, already in circulation in its many Muslim and Christian versions, was in turn part of the arsenal. Like the motif of the Christian Baḥīrā, the Islamic Baḥīrā too was part of the arsenal of Muslim apologists. The Muslims considered that the motif of what is called the “Seal of Prophethood” meant “true” Christianity. In other words, just as Baḥīrā recognized the Prophet of Islam and accepted his message, all genuine Christians too must have done the same.⁵⁵ However, contrary to most versions of the Christian Baḥīrā legend, the Armenian Karshuni made no reference to the predictions about the prophethood of Muḥammad.⁵⁶ While Grigor always maintained a formal style of discussions only occasionally using popular comments and terms, the less academic and blunt style of Matt’ēos revealed layers of interactions and intriguing patterns of mutual perceptions rarely written about.

A. Various Responses to the Questions of the Infidels by Matt’ēos—The “Seven Questions”

As mentioned, *Various Responses* is not published, and for my research I have used the following manuscripts: Matenadaran MS 969, 3854 and Ejmiacin MS 956. In the subtitle, Matt’ēos says that the treatise was written at the request of “pious Abisołom, the great tanutēr (lord, master) of Širyan.”⁵⁷ It was prompted by a debate with a certain Molla Dānishmand ‘Alī, a Persian cleric. On June 25, 1393, he relates, ‘Alī caused the violent death of Catholicos Zak’aria II (incumbency 1369–1393, known as *Nahatak* or martyr) of Alt’amar, in the city of Ostan of Rštunik’, in Vaspurakan, just southeast of Lake Van.

As told by N. Akinean, the tragic episode of Catholicos Zak’aria II is as follows: Molla Dānishmand ‘Alī, a Muslim jurist from the city of Ostan, arrived in the Monastery of Alt’amar and asked Zak’aria if he could leave his *maxat* or sack in his custody. “Suspecting the evil intentions” of the molla, the Catholicos refused. ‘Alī attacked him but fled when the priests of the monastery arrived at the scene. After plucking his own beard and scratching his face, the mulla ‘Alī presented himself to the Amīr of the city of Ostan (around ten kilometers away). Zak’aria in turn arrived there to complain and was taken to the public bath where the Amīr was. The latter however responded by asking the Catholicos to convert to Islam. When Zak’aria refused, the aylazgik’ or the Muslims beat him up and dragged him in the streets of Ostan. Catholicos Zak’aria’s body was brought back to Alt’amar and buried

next to his parents.⁵⁸ These were the circumstances that led to the writing of the *Questions of the Infidels*. As Matt'ëos said in his introduction, the text was a reaction to harassment and accusations of blasphemy or *kufr*. He added:

It is the duty of all Christians to learn to formulate moderate answers to the questions of the infidels, because they are often subjected to the abusive words of the aylazgik' [Muslims] and as in the past, the heretical sects [*herjwacotk'*] have flourished and multiplied. . . . In our times many ancient forms of unbelief and heresies, which fail to distinguish between truth and falsehood, have become extinct. But there still remain the Muslim people [*tačik azg*] as a remnant of the heresies of Arius and Cerinthus. They deny the Trinitarian Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and [in particular] the divinity of Christ. . . . They follow the Prophet Mahmēd and his evil beliefs.⁵⁹

Matt'ëos mentions that the treatise was written at the “glorious” Church of the Holy Cross (or *Surb Xac'*) on the Island of Ałt'amar on Lake Van. The immediate motive was to respond to the accusations of the “mischievous and corrupt [*vnasakar ew pilc*] Dānishmand Alī, who assassinated the pious Catholicos Zak'aria II of Ałt'amar” in the same year or 1393. But the real aim was “to reveal the impiety [*anōrinut'iwn*] of the Muslims and the righteousness of the Armenians.”⁶⁰ The treatise is organized under seven “Responses” to seven “Questions” that are in fact accusations addressed by the Muslims to the Armenians:

1. Describing Christ as Son of God, Implying that He Took a Wife and Had a Son
2. Proclaiming the Divinity of Christ
3. Rejecting the Prophethood of Muḥammad
4. Rejecting Circumcision, hence the “Impurity” of Armenians
5. Rejecting Ablution
6. Genuflection toward the East, hence Pagan Sun Worship
7. Rejecting the Muslims' Fasting at Ramaḍān [*al-ṣiyām*]*—Yarec'an sut Margarēk'* [There Arose False Prophets]

As Matt'ëos explains, the first problem, in the opinion of the Muslims, was describing Christ as the son of God, implying that God took a wife and had a son. Using terms like “father” and “son” was blasphemy [*kufr*], said the Muslims, because they brought divinity into the temporal-material order.⁶¹ Addressing his audience as “we” and referring to the Muslims as “you,” or “they,” Matt'ëos presents what he describes as “rational answers” to these “allegations”:

First, we are absolutely far from implying that God has taken a woman. However, we do believe that God had a son but without the encounter of male and female, because generation of such encounter is physical and human, and not divine. Furthermore, if they [Muslims] ask us about the manner in which the birth [of the Son] came about, we reply that the impossible is possible for God. . . . This position is indeed accepted by many. . . the Spirit is that of the Father and the Word which originates from Him, is the Son.⁶²

Going back to the Old Testament, he points out that the prophets referred to God as the Father and to the faithful as His sons. Moses too did the same in the *T'awrēt'* or the Torah.⁶³ We are not saying, he adds, that "God is the father of a son who is born of a father and mother, because this child would be of corporeal nature, while God is incorporeal." Consequently, there can be no likeness between man and God in this respect. "Man is [created] in the image of God by his intellect [*mtac'*] and the Logos/Word [*ban*]." In other words, Christians proclaim the "intelligibility of divine nature" and it is in this sense that they speak of God as Father and the Word as His Son. He then summarizes the Christology of the Armenian Church:

The divine Word is one, has life and is personal, born of one and not many, He is God born to God and inseparable of Him. . . . The person of the divine Word [Christ] is not a written word for His nature is infinite.⁶⁴

Resorting to imagery, already used in Arab-Christian texts, Matt'ēos gives the metaphor of the sun and light:

The power of the Person of the Word united with the written letter penetrates our minds as the light of the sun. . . . Just as no one can contain the totality of the sun but simply receives its light that spreads in nature . . . similarly, always staying in God Himself, the divine Word is diffused into men imparting wisdom to their minds and graceful words to their speech. So much suffices about the Son.⁶⁵

The Holy Ghost is discussed in the last part of Question 1. Matt'ēos takes "life" as a divine attribute and justifies the third person of the Trinity on that basis.

If they inquire about the Spirit that we mention along the Son, we say that as explained about the divine Word, we call the Divine Life "Spirit" . . . and if life is that of God, then it is the Spirit that is the source of life for the bodies.⁶⁶

Concerning the divine image in man, Matt'ēos instructs the audience to say that “as man is not alive without the soul, and his life is inseparable from him,” so are the persons of the Trinity. These are not creations of our minds but revealed by God Himself, as we read in all the writings of the prophets. The metaphor of the sun is brought up again: “This is similar to the roundness, the light and the heat of the sun, as three in one; similarly an apple is round, red and sweet. So God is three in one.”⁶⁷ He provides other metaphors too.

The second “question” about the divinity of Christ, is perhaps the single most common and significant question in the entire tradition of interfaith polemics. It was first brought up by the Muḥammad himself in the Qur'ān. Matt'ēos approaches the issue very defensively: he advises his reader to listen to the Muslims and “only say that this is what is recorded in our Scriptures, which you do not accept, and we Christians cannot contradict our Scriptures.” In order to lead his opponent to a contradiction, he then takes a Qur'ānic idea—not a quotation—and formulates a simple syllogism:

It is written in your books that . . . *Yisē* [ʿĪsā, Jesus] is *ruhallah* [*rūḥ allāh*, Spirit of God], and ʿAlī that of Man. And if they [Muslims] say that although we say *ruh* we do not mean that it is divine light, you answer that God created five sorts of light: first the angels and demons, second the human souls, third the sun, moon, stars, fourth the light of fire and candles, and fifth the light of the eye [vision] of living beings. Apart from these there is no other light created by God. . . . Now the above refutes your objection and . . . if something is in divine light it means it is truly God.⁶⁸ And if they say that He [Christ] is in divine light but is not God, you reply that if the divine light is not God, and if nature is not God then what is left of God that is God? This is like saying that the leg of Moses is not Moses, his head is not Moses, and all the parts of Moses are not Moses, then what is Moses, if nothing is left of him that is Moses. It is obvious that the whole is constituted of the parts. . . . Similarly, in the case of God. If the divine light is not light, divine power is not God, nothing is left that is God. This is indeed great kufr. From your own scriptures it is clear that divine light is God.⁶⁹

At this point, he proposes a version of the Aristotelian argument from causality to establish the divinity of Christ:

They say that if God speaks to us through that power [the Word, Christ], show us why/how . . . should we accept that Christ is God. . . . [The answer is in the artisan and his work. An artisan is not established as such until he applies his art, even though he claims to be an

artisan. The carpenter is what he is only when he takes his hammer and starts to work [he adds that this is how we come to know God by observing his work]. True art is that which brings about creatures out of nothing and renders the impossible possible. If such deeds reveal God then He is God, if not then the Muslims are right. The whole world knows that Christ made the paralyzed walk, the blind see, the dead rise and made the impossible possible, He is therefore truly God. If they still object by saying that all the prophets performed miracles, they too must be considered gods, we reply that it is true that they were miracle-workers but not the way Jesus was. Christ was autonomous in His power while the prophets depended on God and asked his assistance.⁷⁰

He then goes on to explain the reasons why Christ had to become a “true” man with a body.⁷¹

The third question is probably the gravest, at least for the Muslims. It is the Armenians’ rejection of the Prophethood of Muḥammad. Matt’ēos puts it as follows:

They [Muslims] say that you do not consider *Mehmet* [Mahmed earlier] a prophet . . . but accept Moses while Mehmet is no less a prophet than the other prophets. What fault/deficiency [*pakasut’iwn*] makes you refuse his prophethood?⁷²

The response is based on pure faith in the Scriptures. Matt’ēos advises his audience to produce three answers: the first is simply faith in the Bible. The classic accusation of the Muslims concerning falsification [*tahrif*] does not appear at this point too. The faithful are advised to say:

All our knowledge is derived from the Bible—which you call *Injil*—and we cannot accept other scriptures. . . . Your Mehmet is not mentioned in the Bible which was written much earlier, we therefore cannot recognize him as a prophet.⁷³

The second reason/answer that Matt’ēos gives is that when Muḥammad appeared, Armenians already had a faith of their own and he had nothing new to teach them anyway. “It is your [Muslims’] obligation to follow and obey him, because he converted you from paganism.” He explains the third reason as follows:

As it was customary to send a messenger of *pēšra* or good tidings (in Persian, rather than *bushrah* in Arabic) before the arrival of a king, the coming of Christ was announced and when He appeared, we needed no other. . . . We say that for these reasons we do not believe in Mahmet.⁷⁴

Questions 4–7 concern rites or “laws” of circumcision, ablution, genuflection, and fasting. Both in the East and in the West, they came under heavy criticism as superficial, legalistic, and hypocritical. The fourth question is a direct accusation of “impurity” addressed to Armenians, because they reject circumcision. Matt'ēos teaches his audience that Christians should remind their adversaries that this was a law in the remote past. In ancient times, the people of Abraham⁷⁵ were the only monotheists among pagan nations and needed to be distinguished, so they wanted to have a distinguishing mark on the body; they also refrained from eating pork. But after the coming of Christ, he continues, no pagans were left to be distinguished from, so circumcision became obsolete. Furthermore, while in the past the faith of the Jews was acceptable, the Jews are now a “cursed nation” among all and in particular in the eyes of the Muslims. He says:

We eat pork and do not practice circumcision not to resemble the cursed Jews. . . . He who keeps the laws of the Jews will be a Jew and he who follows those of Christ is a Christian. We disagree with the Jews in these matters, but you follow them, and we have nothing against you in this matter.⁷⁶

The fifth question of the infidels concerns ablution or “washing the *junubk*” (lower parts, *junūb* means south in Arabic). In turn, this discussion appears everywhere. Matt'ēos advises the audience to remind the “infidels” that washing should be of sins and not of physical impurities. He asks, “What use is washing the body when your heart is the seat of sins and full of blood?” He sees no necessity for a law about washing the body, because whoever is soiled will take a bath anyway. He asks,

. . . if washing is for God or man? If it is for God, He looks at the soul [not the body] . . . if washing with water helped anyone to find salvation, then fish would be worthy of it.⁷⁷

The sixth question is an implied accusation of pagan sun worship addressed to those who pray facing east, in this case the Christians. The reply is:

Wherever the king is the servants turn their face towards him, the sun, the moon and the stars are God's servants and they all come from the east, we follow their example. Secondly, the prophet David deliberated

that we should bow towards the east and we obey him. . . . Thirdly, we follow Christ and his apostles . . .⁷⁸ fourthly, Christ described the world as coming from the east and we kneel facing the east.⁷⁹

The seventh and last question concerns the Christians' rejection of the Muslim fast during the Holy Month of Ramaḍān. The Muslims, says Matt'ēos, dismiss Christian fasting as "nothing but a kind of *p'ahrez* [or diet, in Persian] of fat-free food. It is not a real fast." He explains that during Christian fasting the consumption of food is minimal. The Muslims, however, prepare and consume exceptionally rich food that stirs the senses. He then speaks of different types of food each being necessary for the functions of the body.⁸⁰ The last sections of the treatise are purely didactic about ancient times, from Adam to Noah and the Deluge, and then about the Muslim and Jewish calendars, etc.⁸¹

The other polemical treatise of Matt'ēos is *Yarec'an sut Margarēk'* or There Arose False Prophets, written after 1400. Like *Various Responses*, it is still not published and/or studied. This is a sermon and appears in a collection of his unpublished Homilies (or *k'aroz*). Written in classical Armenian mixed with vernacular phrases, idioms, and terms, it is a direct assault on the person and teachings of Muḥammad as a "false prophet." Matt'ēos defines seven conditions for "true prophethood": foreknowledge, altruism, signs, credibility, originality, moral teachings, and personal example. Using direct references to the life and teachings of Muḥammad, he takes up each "condition" and tries to demonstrate that the founder of Islam, who forced himself on people by "threats and death like Tamerlane," did not qualify to being a prophet. Some passages in this sermon are indeed very intriguing. They are not addressed to Muslims but to dervish-type Armenian ascetics. This is how Matt'ēos describes them:

Faking faith and piety, they wander around aimlessly, dressed in black, barefooted and half starved. They despise each other and the Christians. There are many of them and the only way to get rid of them is extermination by the sword, because they mislead the world by making salvation accessible to everyone. This is why the Lord said that there will arise false prophets and this has indeed been the case in the past as well. . . . God allows these [false prophets] to arise for many reasons. First, if the impostors did not exist, the righteous would not be distinguished; secondly, this is how truth becomes more pleasurable.⁸²

B. Grigor, Ėnddēm Tajkac' (Against the Tajiks) and the Sixteen Fallacies or "Molorut'iwns"

Grigor's *Book of Questions* is a compendium of mostly religious and other themes. As he says, it is written at the request of certain Atom, an *uṭṭap'ar* or orthodox scholar. The subject of heresies recurs in many contexts of the book. He may have written it for the school of Tat'ew and soon became one of the most frequently copied texts, hence many different versions. There are slight differences between the lists and the texts of the various copies of the manuscript.

The subtitle of the chapter *Against the Tajiks* is: "Against the doomed nation of the Muslims, who are the precursors of the *Neṛ* [Anti-Christ], [and] the new pagans and the followers of the heresies of Arius and Cerinthus." The book as published by Guleserian in 1930 consists of sixteen chapters, each one dedicated to what Grigor calls a "fallacy" (or *molorit'iwn*), such as the rejection of the divinity of Christ by the Muslims, who simply fail to understand and fall into confusion or fallacies as a consequence.

Grigor uses different styles and methods of argumentation from scholastic formulations to informal debating, to lecturing, preaching, descriptions, and metaphors. Occasionally, he makes direct and abusive remarks through popular idioms and imagery. He advises the reader, who is Armenian despite the dialogue form with hypothetical Persian Tačiks (therefore Shī'is?), to be both defensive and offensive, because Christians stand in a position of truth and justice. The following is the list of the sixteen "fallacies." The last fallacy is to demonstrate that it is the Muslims who are the "true infidels," and not the Armenians, whom they accuse of blasphemy (*kufṛ*).⁸³

1. Denying the Trinity, Similar to the Sabellian (non-Trinitarian) Heretics.
2. Considering God the Origin of both Good and Evil.
3. Rejecting the *Mardeṭut'iwn* (Incarnation, Humanization) of the Word.
4. Rejecting Christ's Divinity and Considering Him a Prophet.
5. Rejecting the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.
6. Considering a Certain Man *Pelambar* (or prophet in Persian and Turkish).
7. Considering the Resurrection Corporeal.
8. Considering the Angels and Spirits Mortal.
9. Despising and Abusing the Cross and the Holy Icons.
10. Indiscriminately Eating the Flesh of Contaminated Animals.
11. Forbidding Wine as *Haram* (forbidden).

12. Considering Washing with Water for Purification of Sins.
13. Despising Armenians for not Being Circumcised.
14. Refusing to Apply the Fast of both the Old and New Laws.
15. Banning the Meat of Animals Slaughtered by Armenians.
16. Considering Us Infidels, while Being such Themselves.

The first fallacy of the Muslims is about the Trinity.⁸⁴ Similar to the Sabellian heretics, says Grigor, the Muslims reject the Trinity. They argue that if we accept the Trinity, we must also grant the birth of God, and since generation implies degeneration and death too, the whole concept becomes void.⁸⁵ In reply, he observes that as a revelation the doctrine is true, but human reason being limited, the concept remains beyond comprehension. Grigor then suggests the idea of the uniqueness of “divine” generation and birth as opposed to natural processes. He then initiates a demonstration based on Aristotelian metaphysics: granting the immutability of God. He says it is perfectly “rational” to argue that the birth of Christ is in eternal time, that is, outside time. Being in eternity, His birth is not a transition from potentiality to actuality, for it is always “actual.” In the rest of this section, Grigor cites variations of the concept of the unity of the divine essence and trinity of its manifestations as its attributes in the three persons. He too gives the example of the sun, its beams, and light as three in one, also fire, light, and heat, again as three in one. These examples, he adds, are to “assist the dim-witted” understand the doctrine.⁸⁶

The second fallacy of the Muslims is considering God the cause of both good and evil.⁸⁷ Holding God as First Cause, says Grigor, and in an attempt to avoid Manichaeism, the Muslims ended up declaring God as the cause of both good and evil, thus committing another fallacy. He insists that God can only be the cause of the good and not evil.⁸⁸ He then gives twelve reasons. Free will, and generally the will, he says, is part of the image of God in man. Man is a sovereign (*anjnišxan*) being.⁸⁹ Even though God foresees everything, his foreknowledge does not in any manner condition or control human actions, which can be good or bad. In other words, Grigor simply reproduces the classic Eznikian theory of evil as the product of human free action.⁹⁰ Another argument for the goodness of God’s nature is a response to an observation by “some Muslims” that if we exclude God from the problem of evil, we must then maintain another power as its source and we will inevitably fall into Manichaeism.⁹¹ Grigor also defines evil as a deficiency, an accident, and not a substance. It may only be the consequence of action by the free and sovereign will of both angels and men. It is like

the absence of light. He then concludes that God is the single cause of all being and argues in favor of the goodness of the will as a faculty created by God.⁹² The rest of the arguments are all in line with his philosophy of evil, predestination, and free will. Of these, the eleventh argument is of particular interest for medieval philosophy. Referring to a certain “philosopher,” in fact Aristotle, he who acts by nature, observes Grigor, will not err. In general, the context of this discussion is reminiscent of Virgil’s first speech on love in Dante’s *Purgatory*. He talks about the “innate” natures of animals and of men. Some are smart, others not, some are peaceful, others aggressive, etc.⁹³ The last part is addressed to Muslim Fatalists, who obviously did not accept free will.

The third fallacy of the Muslims is rejecting the Incarnation of the Word or Christ (*mardetut'iwnn banin*).⁹⁴ Grigor observes that the Muslims argue that since divine nature is immutable, it cannot mutate into human nature, because it will then be subject to change and degeneration. In reply, he reiterates various doctrines all based on the constancy of divine nature, and reports that his adversaries raise a more essential point about God’s omnipotence. If they say that God is omnipotent and his forgiveness is unlimited, He did not have to go through the painful process of becoming man in order to save humanity. Grigor explains that Christ was a revelation of God’s great love for man, and this initiative shows and justifies the extent of the sacrifice.⁹⁵ The reply—by the hypothetical adversary—is that by causing Christ’s death, the quantity of evil increased in the world. Grigor answers that the very act of taking over of a human body and going through what He did, was in itself cause of man’s deliverance.⁹⁶ Finally the expression “father and son” is justified, since it also exists in the Torah of Moses.⁹⁷ (98–99) Matt'ēos had given the same reason.

The fourth fallacy is rejecting Christ’s divinity and considering him just a *peḷambar* or prophet.⁹⁸ Grigor again starts by the limitedness of human reason as opposed to the divine Logos/Word that is uncreated and infallible. He suggests an argument that Matt'ēos uses too: If we deny the divinity of the Word, the Spirit, and the Power of God, we would then be denying God’s existence altogether by denying the existence of the parts (*masunk*).⁹⁹

In this context, Grigor has a more interesting approach. He uses the analogy of Christ being Light. His Persian or Persian-speaking adversaries described Christ or *ʿĪsā* as *ʿYisē nur i nurdan*; in his translation *“luys i lusoy”* or “light in light.” Granting this point, Grigor asks if they consider this “light” created (*etakan*) or uncreated (*anet*). If it

is uncreated, then it is God, and if so, “whose/what light is it that He resides in?” The angels and the heavenly bodies cannot be hosts, if they say that Christ is God’s light, and since divine attributes are one with His essence, then it is true that Christ too is God.¹⁰⁰ He concludes: Christ is—as they say too—“light in light,” and as the light of the sun is one with it,¹⁰¹ so the essence of the father and the son are one and the same. Therefore, Christ is God.¹⁰² However, Grigor states that the “incorporeal light of God” had a corporeal birth from the Virgin.¹⁰³ In other words, the Word of God became man as a single individual (*anj ew dēm*) and a single nature (*bnut’iwn*). He continues: “Christ was born immaculate from the Virgin without the sperm and as you say, he was born of the *bikr* or the Virgin.”¹⁰⁴ At this point and in one of the copies of the manuscript, there is a paragraph which is identical with that of Matt’ēos:

Every artisan is known by his works, now since Christ is truly God, He too is known by his works. Miracles are divine works for they supersede nature. Indeed you assert that *Yisē* is *karamatkar* [miracle-worker in Persian] who raised the dead and made the blind see, therefore He is God.¹⁰⁵

Another argument follows:

If they say that just as the prophets performed miracles, as Moses did before the Pharaoh . . . so did Christ. We say that the prophets acted by God’s power, but Christ acted by His own sovereign will,¹⁰⁶ as kings do by [their own] royal power. As prophets acted by God’s orders, the Apostles performed miracles by Christ’s. Paul raised the dead, Peter made the paralytic walk in the name of Christ. Christ is therefore God. . . .¹⁰⁷ While Christ as God had divine powers, others had to be transferred such powers only temporarily.¹⁰⁸

The next objection raised by the Muslims is about the veracity of Christ’s crucifixion. The Muslims, says Grigor, believe that Christ did not really die on the cross, but it seemed to be so. Grigor insists on the whole process of crucifixion and the sufferings of Christ.¹⁰⁹ If the Muslims insist that He is eternal, then He is God. But since the other prophets too are in the same condition, they must be in paradise, which is an intermediate place, whereas Christ is in heaven. Grigor then mentions the prophets Khēdr and Elias (who are *Enovk’* and *Elea*).¹¹⁰ He concludes: “If you consider Christ ‘*ghiamati ghadi Yisē*’ (or Judge in the Day of Judgment, in Persian), then you are confirming his divinity.”¹¹¹

The fifth fallacy of the Muslims is that they only accept the *Furqān* as the True Law and reject both the Old and New Testaments.¹¹² The Muslims, says Grigor, reject the Old and New Testaments. Although they say that four books are “from heaven, the Torah of Moses, the *Zabur* of David, the *Inçil* [Bible, in Arabic] and the *Furk'an* (or *Sūrat al-Furqān*, the twenty-fifth *sūrah* of the Qur'ān, and has seventy-seven verses or *āyāt*) of Muḥammad, but they only accept the last as the True Law.”¹¹³ He argues that if all four are God's words, then they must all be true, because God is immutable.¹¹⁴ But if one of these is false, then they all are, he observes. In general, Grigor dismisses the Islamic law or the *Sharī'ah*, because in his view it dealt only with “external” and temporal matters and not with the “spiritual” and permanent.¹¹⁵

The sixth fallacy of the Muslims is that they call Muḥammad, a mere man, a prophet or *peḷambar'*. In this section, the arguments are again almost identical with those of Matt'ēos. If omniscience is a divine attribute, says Grigor, then Muḥammad does not qualify to be considered a true prophet, for he has no knowledge of this nature.¹¹⁶ Like Matt'ēos, he says that a “prophet is for the sake of others,” while “Mahmet proclaimed that the world was created for his sake and went on boasting (*mecabanut'iwn*).”¹¹⁷ Another indication against the Prophethood of Muḥammad, in his opinion, is his failure to perform *karamat* or miracles.¹¹⁸ The fifth indication is the absence of any novelty in the so-called “prophetic” teachings of Muḥammad.¹¹⁹ Grigor observes that he simply borrowed ideas from everybody else, while true prophets reveal novelty. The sixth is that a true prophet never contradicts himself, while Muḥammad was equivocal in all his advices. There are other problems too, says Grigor, but he prefers to keep silent about them.¹²⁰ In copy “A” of the manuscript there is an additional paragraph, which appears in Matt'ēos verbatim.¹²¹ It is a direct attack on the personality of the Prophet. He advises his compatriots:

If they ask the reason why the name of their *peḷambar* is absent in our book, we simply say that the Bible was written 700 years earlier [than the Qur'ān] and that it was impossible to find any mention of Muḥammad there.¹²²

Again, no reference is made to the so-called contamination of Christ's Gospel. Grigor explains that even during the times of the Apostles, there appeared sects and false apostles who misled the people and were eventually anathematized.¹²³ Very much in the style of Matt'ēos, in this

section, Grigor continues his advice: If they tell you that if Muḥammad was not a prophet, why was there always an umbrella (*amphovani*) over him? “We” answer that he went around with a large head-cover or a semi-tent called “*sukur*” made especially for him.¹²⁴ Muḥammad, he adds, also imitated the Prophet Elijah (*Elia*) by riding his camel and shading himself by the *sukur* to simulate Moses who walked in a shadow in sunlight, and was luminous at night.¹²⁵ At this point, he gives the “story” of Muḥammad:

... in the Armenian year of 99 (99+551=640/641) and the tenth year of the incumbency of Catholicos Ezr (630–641) [there appeared] someone called Mahmet from the Islamelites, son of Abdlay. He knew little about the Laws of Moses, and had been a student of a hermit called Bxira, from the sect of Arius [residing] at the desert [*anapat* means desert and monastery] of Sinai, and this man [Mahmet] believed in the sect/teachings of Arius.¹²⁶ He said that the kingdom of heaven was physical, and that after the resurrection, there would be food and marriage. He taught laws that contradicted both the Old and New Laws. He uttered many worthless and ludicrous things to his people. They considered him lawgiver, messenger and commander of the Tačiks in the Islamic year of 20 (AD 642). After much slaughtering of and dominating over multitudes, this Mahmet prevented the sword and by persuasive advice subjugated the greater part of the world.¹²⁷ And with a permanent oath he sealed a pact [*murhak*] for the Armenians, which is now called Great Decree [*mec manšur*], that they may hold their Christianity freely and [thus] he sold [*vačareac*] to them their own faith. From each household he took four *drams* [*dirhams*], three marzans of barley, one horse-feeding bag [*jiatoprak*], a hempen rope, and a gauntlet. He ordered that no taxes be collected from the freemen [nobility], cavalry, and clergy. During the 20 years after Mahmet, and to the [Muslim] year 38 [?], *Pupakr* ruled for twenty years [Abū Bakr al-Šiddīq, 632–634] and *Ot'man* [Uthmān Ibn 'Affān] twelve, from 644–656 [he missed 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, 634–644].

After him, the other Mahmet, ruled in his name and in his tradition, as prince and messenger. It is told that Catholicos Lord Sahak [III Jorap'orec'i, 677–703] went to him, but passed away on his way and was taken in his coffin to him [Mahmet or Muḥammad Ibn Marwan, see Volume One, 68–69]. The latter gave the Little *manšur* to the Armenian people. In the same manner as the first Mahmet, [he] released the priesthood, the nobility and the cavalry of all taxes, and allowed them to maintain their faith freely. This much is sufficient for this subject.¹²⁸

The seventh fallacy of the Muslims is the belief that resurrection is corporeal and involves food, women, and pleasures.¹²⁹ According to

Grigor, in these respects, the Muslims were following the teachings of Arius, Cerinthus, and Sakarinus, who anathematized the Bible and God's Church. The idea that Islam was the inheritor of Arianism was very old; connecting hedonism to heresy in turn was an ancient practice that surfaces in Grigor's work too. The Muslims, he says, argue that since resurrection means a return to and recovery of the initial state of man, there must be marriage and all other aspects of life must be restored.¹³⁰ Food and drink are part of life too and the Muslims grant them. Grigor suggests symbolic meanings to the corporeal aspects of life in the afterlife. Food, for example, is spiritual food. Similar to heavenly bodies, he says, the resurrected body is incorruptible and has no physical requirements.¹³¹ The idea that each man will be given forty or seventy nymphs (*hūrīs*) is an absurdity for moral and arithmetical reasons.¹³² Grigor observes that if paradise was a place similar to earth, then the corruption of the earth will infect paradise too. Will there be need for another Judgment Day, he asks? "This world is anyway filled with sins, hell is the house of sinners [by Muslims' approach to paradise], heaven will in turn become a world of injustice and sins." Furthermore, if women in paradise are not for procreation then their abundance there will lead to fornication and disease, and paradise will turn into a brothel. If Muslims, he says, fail to establish a reasonable relationship between men and women on earth, how will they manage to realize a pure life in "*behešt*" (or paradise in Persian).¹³³

The eighth fallacy of the Muslims is considering the angels mortal, like humans. They argue, says Grigor, that whatever has a beginning in time must also have an end. If the angels were created like us, then they too must have an end. This assumption, he explains, entitles them to consider the angels mortal.¹³⁴ His long refutation is based on the immortality of all incorporeal beings. Like the soul, the angels are immortal.¹³⁵ The resurrection of the body, he adds, is due to the immortality of the soul.¹³⁶

The ninth fallacy of the Muslims is the rejection of the cross and holy icons. This was an ongoing debate with the iconoclastic sects as of the fourth century, even earlier. John of Damascus and many polemicists always dealt with the subject of icons. Grigor repeats the classic reply, that man-made objects were simply symbols. "You only see the matter of the cross and fail to comprehend the hidden meaning," he says, "like the illiterate who only see the letters but cannot read." He then sets on a long discussion about the symbolism of the cross as man's redemption through Christ. In the cross, he says, the matter and the form of

divine power are united.¹³⁷ In copy “A” of the manuscript, there are more Arabic terms like *t’aseb* (or *ta’aṣṣub* meaning fanaticism), *nalat* (*na’lah*, curse), *mereb* (*mur’eb*, fearsome), etc.¹³⁸ In this section he refers to the Jews as *jehud* (*yahūd*, Jewish in Arabic), “the most cursed people among all the nations.”¹³⁹

The tenth fallacy is abstaining from pork while eating the meat of all other animals. In this section, Grigor has a detailed classification of those animals whose meat must not be consumed.¹⁴⁰ The reason why the Armenians eat pork, for which the Muslims criticized them, is simply “custom,” he says, just like the “*franč*” (or Franks, Crusaders) eat rabbit and hare.¹⁴¹ He then asks his adversaries, the Muslims who eat horsemeat, “How can you accept Moses as a prophet while you disobey him by eating what he forbade [horsemeat]?”¹⁴² Thus, inconsistently declaring some meats “*halal*” and others “*haram*” or impure, is a “fallacy.”¹⁴³

The eleventh fallacy is forbidding wine as *haram*. Grigor goes back to the prophets of the Old Testament who did not forbid wine and on the contrary, they found it *halal* or lawful. If grapes are good then wine as their product must be too, etc.¹⁴⁴ As usual, in the middle of the discussion Grigor gives direct advice:

If an ignorant man from the Muslims or an aggressive character asks you if wine is *halal* or *haram*, what should your reply be? Answer very briefly that “For us it is *halal* for you it is *haram*” [forbidden, unlawful]. Also tell them that moderate drinking is *halal* but getting drunk is *haram*. . . . Also say that essentially [*ṭabīyat*, meaning by nature or *ṭabī’ah* in Arabic] wine is pure and *halal*, while its effects may be *haram*.¹⁴⁵

The twelfth fallacy is about ablution. The first paragraph is identical to that of Matt’ēos:

They always wash in water and think that water purges them of sins. Tell them that water cleans the dirt off the body but not that of the soul, which is sin, for the corporeal does not affect the spiritual. . . .¹⁴⁶ If they ask you about Baptism, tell them that there is no similarity between ablution and Baptism.¹⁴⁷ Even though the water is the same but the functions are different.

Grigor gives the example of a woman, who when with her husband is *halal*, but when with somebody else she commits *haram* or adultery.¹⁴⁸ If ablution was for purification, then why should the rites of

"*haj*," "*zakat*," fasting, and the "bridge" be necessary? It is good deeds, he adds, that wash away sins, and not water.¹⁴⁹ There follows a series of possible questions and their answers.¹⁵⁰

The thirteenth fallacy is about circumcision. The Muslims despise us, Grigor says, because we are uncircumcised, therefore "impure."¹⁵¹ "Tell them that even though we too follow Abraham, for us the law of Baptism replaced the old law of circumcision," he says.¹⁵² Then, in a style similar to that of Matt'ēos, he explains that the objective of circumcision initially was for Jews to be distinguished from pagans. In another copy there are more details about the procedure itself.¹⁵³ He then brings in other cases, such as the circumcision of women, Ethiopians, etc., and the answers Armenians should give about these cases.¹⁵⁴

The fourteenth fallacy is about fasting. Grigor observes that the Muslim fast is neither that of the Old Law (Jewish) nor of the New Law (Christian). Fasting should be abstention from organic food, everything else is allowed. Moses and Christ really fasted for forty days, he says, but Christians fast fifty days surviving on inorganic food.

For about thirty days you eat richer food than on normal days. Consequently, yours is not fasting. All year long you eat during the day and not night, during *Ramadan* you eat at night and not day. So this is not fasting. As far as God is concerned, there is no night and day, and practically you are still eating and not fasting.¹⁵⁵

In connection with fasting, one of the five pillars of Islam, neither Grigor nor Matt'ēos seem to be aware of their special status.¹⁵⁶ But at all occasions they seem to reject the strictly legalistic traditions of Islam.

The fifteenth fallacy is banning meat slaughtered by Armenians (*hayzēn*). Almost furious and offended, Grigor argues that if the hand and the knife that cut the meat and the tongue that speaks are clean, what is it that contaminates the meat? They say that before we slaughter, we call on the Trinity, "In the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," but you too he adds, say "*Ba nami Khuda* [or 'In the Name of God' in Persian, as the Arabic *B'Isim Illāh*] *besmilla rahman u rahim*" [or *B'Isim Illāh Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate]. If you say the *besmilla* over impure animals, does the meat suddenly purify? Words neither purify nor contaminate. Therefore meat slaughtered by Christians cannot be impure.¹⁵⁷ Grigor then makes a very interesting remark:

In the city of Demešx [*Dimashq* or Damascus] the *sunī* Muslims are not like you, they do indeed eat meat slaughtered by Christians . . . can you deny this? Therefore, your *tʿasubutʿiwn* [*taʿaṣṣub*, in Arabic, or fanaticism] is newly found and it wrongly discriminates against us.¹⁵⁸

The sixteenth fallacy is that the Muslims consider themselves as the only lawful believers and the Christians blasphemers. By “pure reason,” says Grigor, “we demonstrated the falsity of their faith.” He then summarizes the previous fifteen fallacies and then makes a brief reference to a belief that Muḥammad’s name is written on the door of the *behešt*. He asks with obvious sarcasm, “If this is true, where will so many Christians go?”¹⁵⁹

Through these texts, Grigor and Mattēos were in fact doing what Eznik Kolbacʿi (d. ca. 450s) did at the beginning of Armenian literary culture during the first half of the fifth century. His *Etc Aṭandocʿ* (or *Refutation of the Sects*) outlined the position of the Armenians toward the other faiths, as well as the intellectual and religious trends in Armenia and the region. Despite the close similarities between the Armenian texts and the other major Christian polemical-apologetic texts, I strongly suggest that the Armenian polemical-apologetic texts must be studied in historical and not strictly polemical-apologetic contexts. In addition to their special significance as the only texts where the attitude of the Armenian Church toward Islam is made explicit, their historical significance at that juncture in Armenian history seems to be more important. They must therefore be reevaluated in the social-political history of Armenian and Muslim peoples during the late fourteenth century in eastern Asia Minor and al-Shām. Grigor and Eznik—almost a millennium earlier—were politically conscious scholars, and they both looked at matters in political even militant terms. They focused on the importance of sound knowledge of one’s own beliefs as well as those of the “others” as a weapon. The objective is explicitly political and the style militant.

During the fifth century, the adversaries of Armenians were the Zoroastrian Persians, the Manichean and Marcionite sects, and their many Armenian sympathizers. During the fourteenth century the “enemies” were the Muslims, again their many Armenian sympathizers, the converts, and still the sects. The condition of the illiterate peasants everywhere was problematic and complicated matters greatly. Contrary to Muslims who had a duty to read their Scriptures, the majority of Armenians were illiterate, had no access to the Bible, and no knowledge

about Christian doctrines and practice. Conversions and transitions were made for survival and success, but often because of access and availability of information through missionaries or simply interaction. Once in the Muslim “camp” so to speak, Armenians served the ruling people, in this case the Mongols, previously the Arabs, Turks, and Persians. The problems were invariably economic, social, and political. Both in the fifth century and the fourteenth, the objectives of these Armenian polemicists were not primarily theological, as was the case of Arab-Christian apologetics. Latin polemicists in turn must be viewed in the context of Crusader politics and the aftermath of the fall of the Muslims in the Spain should also be considered. Following the demise of the Aršakuni dynasty in 428 and the growth of Persian influence in eastern Armenia, Eznik was more concerned about the condition of Armenians under the Sassanians and declared that life was a war and he who had the better weapons would win. Grigor made similar remarks, as mentioned earlier. They were both providing weapons for a battle, in their words.

A sociological-political reading of these texts will define the manner in which the Mongol authorities managed the mixed populations in their regions, apparently in the name of Islam. Furthermore, in the absence of other texts where Christian-Muslim relations under the Mongols are explicitly referred to, the texts of Grigor and Matt'ēos gain special significance. Unfortunately, so far these texts were restricted to purely theological contexts, and apart from very few references, they have never been studied and approached as texts of unique historical value. This was the rationale of including these texts in this particular study, as a long footnote to the history of Islamic-Armenian interactions during the later Mongol period. Surely these texts also have a literary-artistic value. For the first time after centuries of interaction, mutual images or the images of the “Muslim other” as well as the “Christian other” were made vividly explicit. Otherwise, there are only very rare snapshots, so to speak, in troubadour poetry, popular arts, and manuscript illuminations. Part Two of Volume Three is indeed material for further studies in the theme of mutual images, as another paradigm in the context of Islamic-Armenian interactions.

Notes

1. Matt'ēos Jułayec'i, *Matt'ēos Vardapeti vashn harc'manc' anorinac' zanzan patasxanin zor xndreal barepaštn Abisolom mecs tanutērn Širyana* [Various Responses to the Questions of the Infidels by Matt'ēos Vardapet, Requested

- by Abisołom the Pious Great Lord of Širyan], Mat. Ms. #3854 (1471), fols 107–113b; Ėjmiacin Ms.# 956, now Matenadaran MS 969 (1720–1721). Henceforth Matt'ëos, Various Responses or VR.
2. Matt'ëos Ĵulayec'i, *Yarec'an sut Margarëk*; in *K'arozner*, [There arose false prophets in his *Homilies*] Number 23 in a collection of forty-four Sermons, although he is said to have 50, Mat. Ms. #2229 (1689) fols. 185b–190b; Ėjmiacin Ms. # 710, 2114.
3. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, "*Ėnddëm Tačkak' and I K'ašunën K'atacu*" [Against the Muslims-Excerpts from the Kašun]; in Papken Guleserian, *Islamë Hay Grakanut'ean mēj* [Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature and Excerpts from the Kashun], (Vienna: Mxit'arists, 1930); Henceforth Grigor, *Against the Tačiks*. There is a French translation: Frederic Macler, Frederic, "L'Islam dans la littérature arménienne," *Revue des Études Arméniennes* I (1932), 493–522.
4. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Girk' Harc'manc' Eric's Eraneal Srboy Hörn Meroy Grigori Tat'ewac'uynn* [Book of Questions], (Istanbul: Yohannu Vartabed Press, 1729).
5. Guleserian, *Islamë*, Introduction, 5–8.
6. Xaç'atrean, *Record of the Arabic Inscriptions*, 11, 56. See Inscriptions # 58–80, 103–12.
7. *Ibid.*, 49.
8. Spros Vryonis Jr., "Byzantine Attitudes toward Islam during the late Middle Ages," In Vryonis, *Studies on Byzantium*, vol. II, VIII, 263–86.
9. *Ibid.*, 263.
10. Some of the historians of the period are: Samvël Anec'i, Mxit'ar Ayrivanec'i, Kirakos Ganjakec'i, Step'anos Őrbelean. For The period, see G. Yovsëpean, *Xalbakeank' kam Prošeank'* [*Xalbakeans or Prošeans*], (Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate Publications, 1969). L. Papayan, *Hayastani Soc'ial-K'atakakan Patmut'iwnë 13–14 Darerum* [The Social-Political History of Armenia during the thirteenth and fourteenth Centuries], (Erevan: Hayastan Publications, 1964).
11. For the School of Glajor see L. G. Xaç'erean, *Glajori Hamalsaranë Hay Mankavaržakan Mtk'i Zargac'man mēj* [The University of Glajor in the development of Armenian pedagogical thought], (Erevan: Luys Publications, 1973). On the subject of Glajor also see:
 - Garegin Yovsëp'eanc', *Xalbakeank' kam Prošeank' Hayoc' Patmut'ean mēj* [The Xalbakeank' or the Prošeank' in Armenian History, Part II (Jerusalem: SurbYakop, 1942), 188–279.
 - Xaç'ikean, "Glajori Hamalsaranë ew nra Saneri Awartakan Atenaxosut'iwnnerë [The University of Glajor and the dissertations of its graduates], *Petakan Hamalsarani Gitakan ašxatut'iwnneri žołowacu*, XXII [Erevan: Research collections of the State University of Erevan, XXIII], 423–50.
 - Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Les manuscrits arméniens illustrés des XIIe, XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, (Paris: E. D. Bocard, 1937).
12. Maghakia Őrmanian, *Azgapatum* [History of the Nation], vol. II, (Istanbul: V. & H. Der Nersesian, 1914), 2016.
13. For a list of these translations, see G. Grigorean, *Mijnadarean Hay P'ilisop'ayut'ean Harc'eri šurj* [Concerning some issues of medieval Armenian philosophy], (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Publications, 1987), 75–77.

14. In: Lewon Xaç'ikean, (ed) *Fourteenth Century Colophons*, (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1950), 613.
15. N. T'ovmasean, *Grigor Tat'ewac'i- Soc'ial-Tntesakan Hayeac'k'nerë* [The Social-Economical Views of Grigor Tat'ewac'i], (Erevan: Mitk' Publications, 1966), 24.
16. In: Lewon Xaç'ikean, (ed) *Fifteenth Century Armenian Colophons, Part I, 1401–1450*, (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Publications, 1955), 77.
- The Qara Qoyunlu, (1378–1469/780–874) or Black Sheep, were a clan of Turkmens, who spread in Vaspurakan and Siwnik', and established a dynasty in Armenia and Azerbaijān. Qara-Yūsuf, the second chief of the line, was several times driven into exile by Timur, but after the latter's death in 1405/807 he returned. The Black Sheep were superseded in 1469/874 by Uzun Ḥasan of the rival clan of the White Sheep or the Aq Qoyunlu.
17. Lewon Xaç'ikean, "Life and Works of Matt'ëos Jułayec'i," *Banber Matenadaran* 3 (1956), 57–84, 63.
18. *Fifteenth Century Colophons*, 119–20.
19. L. Xaç'ikean, "Matt'ëos Jułayec'I," 69. The source: *Vasn K'arozut'ean Banin*, Mat. Ms. #6607, fol. 229b.
20. Ibid., 70–71.
21. See Xaç'ikean, *Fifteenth Century Colophons*, 120–21.
22. Ibid., 72–75.
23. Leo, *Erkeri Jołovacū* [Collected works], vol. II, (Erevan: Hayastan Publications, 1967), 469.
24. Xaç'ikean, "Matt'ëos Jułayec'I," 79.
25. Ibid., 76. Source: *K'nnut'iewn Gorcoc' Arak'eloc'*, Mat. Ms. #1402, fols 155a–155b.
26. Ibid., 80–81. Source: *K'nnut'iewn*, Mat. Ms. #1402, fol 232a.
27. H. Gabriëlean, *Hay Patma-P'ilisop'ayakan Mtk'i K'nnakan Patmut'ewn* [Critical History of Armenian Philosophy of History], (Erevan: Mitk' Publications, 1966), 160.
28. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Girk' K'arozut'ean—Jmeian* [Book of Sermons—Winter Volume], (Istanbul: 1740). 29. 173. The passage in Armenian: 'Bnakann molri i čšmartut'enë ew tarakusi ew hawatn anmolar ew antarakuys ē i čšmartut'ewn.'
29. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Girk' Harc'manc' Eric's Eraneal Srboy Hörn Meroy Grigori Tat'ewac'uyñ* [Book of Questions], (Istanbul: Yohannu Vardapet Press, 1729), 101.
30. Grigor, *Book of Sermons—Winter volume*, 172.
31. Grigor, *Hamarot Lucumn Porp'iwri* [Concise Analysis of Porphyry], (Madras: 1793), 330.
32. Grigor, *Girk' K'arozut'ean—Amaran* [Book of Sermons- Summer Volume], (Istanbul: Abraham T'rakac'i Press, 1741), 444.
33. Ibid., 454.
34. Grigor, *Book of Questions*, 121. The passage in Armenian: 'Gitut'ewn miaworë zgitacōn ew zgitelin.'
35. Ibid., 9.
36. Ibid., 231
37. Grigor, *Girk' K'arozut'ean—Jmeian* [Book of Sermons- Winter Volume], (Istanbul: Abraham T'rakac'i Press, 1740), 190.

38. See A. Awetisean, *Haykakan Manrankarč'ut'ean Glajori Dprocē* [The Glajor School of Armenian miniatures], (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Publications, 1971). Other works of Grigor are: *Oskep'orik* (Istanbul: 1746); *Concise Analysis of Porphyry* [Hamaṛot Lucumn Porp'iwri], (Madras:1793), *Calkak'at Meknut'ean i Luswvor Banic' . . . vardapeti Yovhan Vorotnec'iun* [A collection of the interpretations of the thoughts of Yovhan Orotnec'i], Mat. Ms. # 2460), Interpretations of the Gospels and the Psalms, Mat. Ms#1264, #1019.
39. Grigor, *Book of Sermons—Winter volume*, 173. The passage in Armenian: *Bnakan k'nmu't'ean hetewi herjwac isk hawatuyn ułłaparut'iwn*.
40. Grigor, *Book of Sermons—Summer Volume*, 15.
41. Grigor, *Book of Sermons—Winter Volume*, 82. See T'ovmasean, *Armenian Social*, 75.
42. Grigor, *Book of Questions*, 31.
43. Grigor, *Book of Sermons-Summer Volume*, 610. The passage where the *Ner* is said to be opposed to the cross, etc. In Armenian: *Nerē hakarak ē kač'i, ekelec'woy, paštman, srbut'eanc'n, ałot'ic', ewayln*.
44. N. T'ovmasean, *Hay Soc'ialakan-Tentesagitakan Mitkē IX-XIV Darerum* [The Armenian Social-Economic Thought during the Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries], (Erevan: Hayastan Publications, 1970), 212–13.
45. *Ibid.*, 219.
46. See *Ibid.*, 220–21. Source: Matenadaran Ms. # 1264, fol. 352b.
47. T'ovmasean, *Armenian Social*, 73.
48. The passage: *Zi brunk' en ew iřxec'olk' i veray ařxarhi*. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Girk' or koč'i Sałmosi Kałwacoyn*, Matenadaran Ms. #1019, fol. 38a. See T'ovmasean, *Armenian Social*, 225.
49. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Book of Sermons- Summer Volume*, 610.
50. *Ibid.*, 15.
51. For the biography of Ĵulayec'i see Xač'ikean, "Life and Works of Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i," *Banber Matenadaranani*, 3 (1956), 57–84.
52. Hamzasb Oskian, *Step'anos Rořka and Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i*, (Vienna: Mxit'arists, 1968).
53. *Ibid.*, 119. Oskean has the complete list of the works of Matt'ēos and summary information about them, 141–78. These are: Matt'ēos Ĵulayec'i, *Matt'ēos Vardapeti vasn harc'manc' anorinac' zanazan patasxanin zor xndreal barepařtn Abisołom mec tanutērn řiryanay* [Various Responses to the Questions of the Infidels by Matt'ēos Vardapet Requested by the Great Elder of řiryan Pious Abisołom], (Mat. Ms. #3854, Ėjmiacin Ms.# 956). Other works: *Meknut'iwn Vec'oreic'* [Interpretation of the Six Days], *Meknut'iwn Yovhannu Avetarani* [Interpretation of the Gospel of John], *Meknut'iwn Łukasi Avetaranin* [Interpretation of the Gospel of Luke], *Meknut'iwn Gorcoc' Araķ'eloc'* [Interpretation of the Works of Apostles], *Girk' or Meknut'iwn Ut'n Xorhrdoc' Metac'* [Interpretation of the Eight meanings of Sin], *Nerbotakan* [Eulogy on the occasion of the death of Grigor Tat'ewac'i], *K'arozner* [Homilies, forty-fouralthough he is said to have fifty], of which are *Yarecan sut Margarēk'* [There Arose False Prophets] the 23rd, Mat. Ms. #579, 2229, Ėjmiacin Ms. # 710, 2114), *Ganjer ew Taler* [Songs and Poems, six texts), eight minor works, among them *Vark' Grigori Tat'ewac'woy* [Life of Grigor Tat'ewac'i], and *Questions of the Infidels*.
54. Grigor, *Against the Tačiks*, 53.

55. Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahîrâ- Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 37.
56. See S. Gero, "The Legend of the Monk Bahîrâ—The Cult of the Cross, and Iconoclasm," *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam—VIIe—VIIIe Siècles* (Damascus, Institut Français de Damas, 1992). In some Armenian sources there is the view that the monk Bahira wanted to baptize Muḥammad. See ed. M. O. Darbinean-Melikean, *Istorija anonimnogo povestvovatelju, Pseudo-Shabuh Bagratuni*, (Erevan: Izd-vo AN Arm. SSR, 1971), 43.
57. *Matt'ëos Vardapeti vasn harc'manc' anorinac' zanazan patasxanin zor xndreal barepašn Abisołom mec tanutêrn Širyana*.
58. Nersês Akinean, *Gavazanagirk' Kat'olikosac' Alt'amarî* [History of Catholicoi of Alt'amar], (Vienna, Mxit'arists, 1920), 68. Ostan Rštuneac' was a city on the southern shore of Lake Van, its fortress was on the cliffs overlooking the city. It was said to be the capital of King Rusa of Urartu. At the end of the eighth century, the Arcrunis freed it from the Arabs and; at the beginning of the tenth, it became the capital of King Gagik Arcruni who renovated it. After the fall of the Arcrunis in 1021 and the invasions of the Seljuks around the middle of the eleventh century, the city saw consecutive occupations in 1424, it was destroyed by Qara-Qoyunlu Iskandar (1420–1437). Later on the Kurds settled there.
59. Matt'ëos, *Various Responses*, fol. 107b. Henceforth VR.
60. Ibid., fol. 108a.
61. Ibid., fol. 108b.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., fol. 109a.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., fol. 109b.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., fol. 110a.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., fol. 110b.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., fol. 111a.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., fol. 111b.
77. Ibid., fol. 112a.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., fol. 112b.
80. Ibid., fol. 113a.
81. Ibid., fols. 113a–113b.
82. Matt'ëos, *There Arose False Prophets*, Mat. Ms. 2229, fol. 188a.
83. Grigor, *Against the Tačiks*, henceforth AT. The Armenian titles in sequence and transliteration: 1. Zi uranan zerrordut'iwn anjanc'; 2. ZBari ew zč'ar yAstucoy asen; 3. Uranan zmardełut'iwnn banin; 4. zKritos oč' xostovanin Astuac, ayl mard sosc ew p'ełambar; 5. Zamēnayn surb girs, aysink'n zhin ew znor ktakarans, oč' ēndunin; 6. Zomn mard, p'ełambar asen; 7. zYarut'iwn

marmnakan asen; 8. Zhreštaks ew zhogis mahkanac'u asen; 9. Anargen znšan xacin ew zpatkers surb; 10. Zpilc kendaris oč' ėntren ayl zamenayn anxtir uten; 11. Zginin haram ėmpen; 12. Hanapaz ĵrov ołolin ew srbut'ean hamarin; 13. Krč'ateln or ė sunat'eln; 14. Pahk' oč' unin oč' zhinn ew znors; 15. Zhayzēns oč' uten; 16. Zi anorēnk' en ew karcen zink'eans orinavor gol.

84. Grigor, AT, 52–62.
85. Ibid., 52.
86. Ibid., 61.
87. Ibid., 62–88)
88. Ibid., 63.
89. Ibid., 70.
90. Ibid., 68–70.
91. Ibid., 70.
92. Ibid., 71.
93. Ibid., 78.
94. Ibid., 88.
95. Ibid., 91–92.
96. Ibid., 94.
97. Ibid., 98–99.
98. Ibid., 99.
99. Ibid., 100.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., 101.
102. Ibid., 102.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., 103.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid., 104.
108. Ibid., 104–106.
109. Ibid., 106–107.
110. Ibid., 107.
111. Ibid., 108.
112. Ibid., 109.
113. Ibid., 109–10.
114. Ibid., 110.
115. Ibid., 114.
116. Ibid., 115.
117. Ibid., 116.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid., 117.
120. Ibid.
121. Matt'ēos, *There Arose False Prophets*, Mat. Ms. 2229, fols. 190a-b.
122. Grigor, AT, 118.
123. Ibid., 118.
124. Ibid., 120.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.

127. Ibid., 121.
128. Ibid. 122–23
129. Ibid., 123.
130. Ibid., 123.
131. Ibid., 126–27.
132. Ibid., 129.
133. Ibid., 130–31.
134. Ibid., 132.
135. Ibid., 135–36.
136. Ibid., 137.
137. Ibid., 139.
138. Ibid., 141–42.
139. Ibid., 147.
140. Ibid., 148–50.
141. Ibid., 151.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid., 152.
144. Ibid., 153–54.
145. Ibid., 156–58.
146. Ibid., 159.
147. Ibid., 160.
148. Ibid., 161.
149. Ibid., 163.
150. Ibid., 164–66.
151. Ibid., 166.
152. Ibid., 166–67.
153. Ibid., 167.
154. Ibid., 170.
155. Ibid., 175–76.
156. The most essential of the Muslim's duties/rites are: 1. Profession of Faith in God and His Prophet; 2. Prayer (*Ṣalāt*) five times a day—the number comes from Zoroastrian influence; 3. Fasting in the month of Ramaḍān (*Ṣawm*); 4. Poor Tax (*Zakāt*) payable according to a definite procedure; 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Ḥajj*) to be performed if possible at least once a lifetime; 6. Holy war (*jihād*) against unbelievers, which however was dropped later on. See Bertold Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs*. Translated by F. R. Bagley, vol. I (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), 17.
157. Grigor, At, 178.
158. Ibid., 180.
159. Ibid., 182–86.

Summary: The Arguments in Volume One

In order to give the reader of Volume Three and of the other volumes as well a comprehensive introduction to the entire work, this volume was introduced by the Prologue, the General Introduction, and the Introductions of the three volumes. Similarly, and with the same concern, it will be concluded by summaries of the arguments in all three volumes.

As the reader who got to this point in Volume One will have realized, this is not a conventional book of history. Many strands of themes, events, disciplines, and sensibilities went into its making. The initial idea of the larger study was depicting a medieval Near Eastern landscape in which Armenians were indigenous, integral, and active elements. The main argument of the book as put forward in the Introduction is as follows: If historical Armenia as well as the modern Republic have always been between central Asia Minor, the southern Caucasus, and the Islamic world, and if until few decades ago, the entire region, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, the Caspian, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, was the *oikoumenē* or habitat of most of the Armenians, their history too was naturally part of these locations and peoples. Since Armenian narratives—both medieval and modern—do not reflect this philosophy of Armenian history, they fail to account for the totality of the Armenian experience in all its interactive aspects in and as part of the region. Consequently, so far undetected or intentionally marginalized paradigm cases of interactions stand as counter cases to the circulating narratives. They are “arguments” against them. Chronologically arranged, these paradigm cases reflect intriguing processes and factors, and expand the peripheries of Armenian historical thinking into newer possibilities.

The Introduction suggests a dialectical instead of an essentialist approach to the ongoing Armenian experience in the Islamic world.

One of the obstacles before this transformation is what may be called a culture of authority among Armenians. For many Armenians, including scholars and academics, the seeming security-fixed traditions and authority provided are more “useful” than the uncertainties critical approaches may generate. The Armenian experience in the medieval Near East as well as the modern Middle East was and still is too diverse and complicated. Constructs based on the idea of a persistent and heroic nation are too narrow. Armenian histories should reflect this condition in order to avoid essentialism. Throughout their history, Armenian communities evolved by the requirements of their locations. Every phenomenon must therefore be studied in specific context. For example, just as today American-Armenian communities can only be studied—and are—in local contexts, similarly, medieval Armenian history (after the mid-seventh century) can only be studied and understood in the context of the Islamic world. While no one argues against looking at American-Armenians in American context, fourteen centuries of Armenian experience with Islam is barely touched. In fact, it has even been systematically overlooked.

The core of the matter is that there is a politics of Armenian historical writing. A certain philosophy of Armenian history underlies and sustains specific manners of historical thinking and writing and prevents interrogation and analysis of the existing accounts. Surely there are exceptions. There is also a trend among the historians—mostly in the West—who claim to be free from ideology and invest only on the so-called “objective” evidence. Epistemologically weak, this position has been dismissed over a century ago and so-called absolute objectivity about past events is a myth. Furthermore, there are no demarcation lines between history proper and philosophy of history. There is always a philosophical grid of some sort, as well as institutional and individual considerations. Being an Armenologist in these circumstances today, is more than just a self-identification and a self-classification. It means being part of the traditional Armenian politics of truth or a critic of it, being a contributor to the “culture industry” or its adversary and reformer. The arguments in this volume and the book naturally reflect this questioning. The central argument of Chapter 1 on “Factors in the Pre-Islamic Armenian Condition” is that the manners in which Armenians (as institutions, classes, trends, and individuals) interacted with cultural and political Islam were shaped by factors already active in the previous centuries. In other words, there is a clear continuity in the patterns of interaction that must be identified and analyzed. Some of

the major factors already active prior to the arrival of the Arabs, were the East–West rivalries, the conceptualization of the nation through the fundamental legacies or the loyalties of the Classical Age, the definition of Armenian orthodoxy/heresy, and beginnings of social–religious dissidence.

In the case of the dissident trends or the sects and in general, there was a massive and continuous phenomenon of medieval revolutionary thought and action. It can easily, rather must be qualified as Medieval Armenian Dissidence. It took shape by the middle of the fourth century and evolved to the end of the middle ages and beyond. Religious heresy was just an aspect, but the phenomenon was a much more inclusive process that was never studied as a singularity and an integral part of Armenian history. A separate study on Armenian dissidence is feasible but not before a comprehensive study where dissidence is shown to be an organic part of the whole. In other words, heterodox and/or “odd” phenomena—such as Muslim Armenians—are as much part of Armenian history as the “orthodox.” Only a holistic approach will detect and place these elements in their natural contexts. In this respect, the history of Armenian Christianity will only be complete by the inclusion of all its phases and trends. Not all the dissidents were “heretics”; many were simply oppressed and marginal factions, such as slaves and women. There were social reformists who were as “Christian” as anyone of their adversaries. Dissidence was a deliberate often political choice and marked a good amount of sophistication at that time. In Chapter 1, I observed that the twenty-four canons of the Council of Gangra (374/5) summarized and anticipated what can be qualified as the core of medieval Armenian dissident ideology.

As discussed in Chapter 2 on “Early Arab Campaigns and the Regulation of Relations According to the Medinan Legacy,” the Arab Period in *Armīnyah* lasted four and not two and a half centuries (from 640 to 884), as generally accepted by historians of Armenia. The classification is based on three assumptions that are not supported by the events of the times: the first is assuming that the rise of the first Bagratuni king in 884 caused a radical change in the status quo; the second is assuming Armenia as a clearly defined geographic area by the end of the ninth century; the third is assuming that Armenians totally broke off from the ‘Abbāsid world and Arab control. While the East–West conflict continued with force, Arab rule over the entire eastern Asia Minor led to the massive politicization–militarization of Armenian dissidents. It had another consequence that is rarely mentioned. This was the

empowerment of the Church and its politicization too. As discussed in this chapter, with rare exceptions, the Islamic states respected the clergy, places of worship, and monasteries. They were exempted from taxes. Very often it was the clergy that represented the Armenians in negotiations.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Armenian history can only be fully studied with an extensive use of Arab sources. Two peculiarities distinguish Arab accounts and justify this insistence on Arab sources: geographic and ethnic. Arab sources are much more expansive and inclusive, because the medieval *Armīnyah* in Arab sources was much bigger than any version of the historic land. The second is the term *armanī* (or Armenian). The word *armanī* referred equally to those who were natives and/or inhabitants of what they called *Armīnyah* and those who were ethnic Armenians who lived elsewhere. Otherwise, there were no restrictions on their religious backgrounds. The term *armanī* was very similar in use and connotation to the word *ʿarabī* or Arab. More importantly, *Armīnyah* and *alarman* were presented as indigenous elements of the Near East and the narratives did not single them out from the regional texture. Here lay the significance of these sources and the legitimacy of my suggestion to re-evaluate narratives in the context of Near Eastern histories. For example, the entire episode, rather the century of Armenian military and political involvement in al-Shām and Fāṭimid Egypt was lost for Armenian historiography, before my excavation from Arab sources. This was a “paradigm” case. All arguments in this study are based on similar cases that are fully supported by whatever testimonies available in Arab sources. These paradigm cases are so many and so significant that they generate an entirely different Armenian landscape in Near Eastern context.

One of the most novel arguments of Chapter 2 concerns the regulation of Armenian–Islamic relations through agreements that were described as peace treaties, oaths, compacts, etc. The 652 treaty between Muʿāwiyah, the Governor of al-Shām at that time, and Prince Theodoros Rštuni, the Governor of Armenia, should be looked upon not as the first in its kind and in isolation. It is a link in a tradition of Islamic oaths (*ʾahd*) to the non-Muslims or the *dhimmīs*. This treaty and all others are rooted in the Prophet’s policy toward the non-Muslims formulated during the Medīnan period (from his migration or *Hijrah* to this city in 622, to his death in 632). It is explicit in the Qurʾān as well. Various types of agreements in what may called “Medīnan” spirit

were reached between Muslim rulers and their non-Muslim subjects. I have observed that as of the *History* of Sebēos, a contemporary to the early invasions—a literary tradition began in Armenia. According to this tradition, Islamic–Armenian contacts allegedly began twenty years earlier, during the Medinan decade. The two treatises of 652 and 654 were seen as one and as a link in a series that continued to the fifteenth century and later. It was probably referred to in 1605–1606, during the negotiations between Safavid Shāh ‘Abbās and the bishop of the newly established Armenian city of New Julfa near Isfahan. It even echoed in the Ottoman *Tanzimat* of the nineteenth century. Since the Christians needed protection, they seem to have produced and circulated texts of alleged agreements to legitimize their demands as per the initial commitment of the Prophet to safeguard the rights of the dhimmī communities. It is impossible to establish the authenticity of circulating texts from the seventh century to the modern period. But this is not the point and it cannot serve the case of those who dismiss the entire subject on the basis of the absence of authentic texts. The point is that from the earliest periods of Islam, a tradition was established by the Prophet himself and ratified by the Qur’ān. In Armenian literature at least, this tradition gained a peculiar legitimacy. Sometimes, even some Muslim rulers adopted and implemented its basic terms, whenever beneficial to them. Each text in circulation claimed to be based on the previous one/s—which it cited—and became a link in a continuum. This was a literary process which rightly acquired a historicity of its own and became an aspect of Islamic–Armenian relations. Also, in most of these so-called oaths, Armenian clergy represented the Armenians, hence the peculiarity of the political status of the Church in the Islamic state. Chapter 3 on “The Umayyad Period and the Reconfirmation of Oaths” is a brief account of this period. It also suggests a new perspective on Islamic–Armenian interactions. It is the alliance of heterodox Armenians with the Muslim side on the ‘Abbāsid frontiers land from the late eighth century to the Seljuk period. This is taken up in Chapter 4 titled “The Armenians in the ‘Abbāsid World—The Paradigms of Borderlands and Dissidence.”

The Borderlands is a major paradigm to explain many aspects and elements of Armenian and Near Eastern history during the Arab Period. An important part of Medieval Islamic–Armenian history must be studied in the context and by the paradigms of the Borderlands. This region was an appropriate milieu for indigenous Near Eastern syncretistic cultures to persist, even flourish. On these territories, all

dichotomies were blurred and extraordinary patterns of life proliferated. Paulician and T'ondrakian histories are in fact part of the Borderlands episode and territories from the ninth to the twelfth centuries and later. In medieval Arab histories, the region surfaces only partially in the accounts of Byzantine–Arab wars. Otherwise, there are very intriguing instances of a unique place and period. For example, in the context of 'Abbāsid campaigns in 857/242H, Ibn al-Athīr almost casually speaks of Muslim Armenian army general 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī, and his “allies” the Paulician leader Karbeas and 'Umar Ibn 'Abdallāh al-Aqtā of Melitene. In 861, these three formidable men were fighting the Byzantines as a coalition. Few if anyone has noticed that the first was a Muslim Armenian, the other was a Paulician Armenian (who probably converted to Islam), and the third was a local amīr—not an 'Abbāsid-appointed official. One should also remember that at least half of their fighters were Armenian, be they Muslim or Paulician. These were the realities on the Borderlands, and at the time they were “normal” for the people involved but not for the mainstream Armenian histories neither then and nor now.

The Borderlands became an appropriate milieu for another paradigm, that of Near Eastern syncretism and popular cultures. The Byzantine epic of *Digenis Akritis* is an artistic expression which also has a peculiar historicity. Circumstances on the peripheries of the both the Caliphate and Byzantium-generated new social types, such as the Paulician *astatoi* (unstable, vagrants, vagabonds) and the later militant “brigands,” “bandits.” Their role in regional history awaits study. Another important subject of the ninth century is the link between the Irano-Islamic sects and the T'ondrakians. The so-called heresy was only a vague description of widespread dissident movements of many ethnic backgrounds and faiths, which also entertained mixed beliefs and customs. These trends were in constant contact and collaboration, hence the link, for example, between T'ondrakism and its contemporary Khurramid Babak's movement. In this context, Armenian–Ismā'īlī relations and doctrinal affinities are also suggested and briefly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 dealt with the Armenian Dynastic Principalities or the Age of Kingdoms. One of the major themes is the connection between the imperial and religious politics of the Christian rulers, be they Byzantine, Armenian, or Frankish. In this respect, the Syrian expedition of John Tzimiskes, 125 years before the Crusaders, is a paradigm. Irrespective of the discrepancies between the rhetoric and the

achievements, the claim to liberate the Holy City and the Christians from the “infidels” reflected the political space at that time and fixed a banner for subsequent Christian politics in the Islamic world and the legacy of the “sword and cross” and “king and monk.” The last section of this chapter proposes different perspectives on dissident uprisings and reformist movements during the tenth century in the Armenian world, east and west, and major figures such as Bishop Yakobos and Grigor Narekac’i.

Summary: The Arguments in Volume Two

The main argument of this book, as put forward in the Introduction of Volume One, is as follows: If historical Armenia as well as the modern republic have always been between central Asia Minor, the southern Caucasus, and the Islamic world, and if until a few decades ago, the Near/Middle East was the *oikoumenē* or habitat of most of the Armenians, their history also was naturally a part of the region and its peoples. I also observed that in this region the Armenian experience, in general, has been too diverse and complicated to respond to simplistic constructs around the idea of a persistent, heroic yet victimized nation. Indeed, despite claims, no constant line of what some call “Armenian ideology” can be traced or established, other than the one that is marketed by circulating both medieval and modern narratives. In fact, a certain politics of historical writing supported by a culture of authority has focused on certain episodes and recently on the Armenian Genocide (of 1915), in particular. The themes introduced in Volume Two stand as proofs of large phases and, more importantly, peculiarities of Armenian involvement in the medieval Near East—both Islamic and Christian—that traditional histories have failed to notice, explain, or simply marginalize.

This volume sometimes literally “excavates” paradigmatic cases of a lost Armenian phase or a “world,” so to speak, from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. In general, this volume is central to the book in several respects. One of my major arguments in Chapter 1 on “Bilād al-Shām in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries and the Armenian Intermezzo” is that the two centuries from the 970s to the last quarter of the twelfth constituted a distinct phase in both Armenian and regional history. The record is almost entirely in Arab histories, as the reader will have realized. In other words, classifications of phases should be reconsidered; otherwise, the most interesting phase of Armenian history

will continue to remain in obscurity. By the mid-eleventh century, the Armenian dynastic territories or the kingdoms had been annexed to Byzantium, but the point I make is that the loss of sovereignty—rather semi-autonomy—did not freeze Armenian military–political activity by both the “orthodox” and extra establishment-heterodox factions. The contrary is true: New contexts and circumstances generated new and intriguing patterns of interaction that reached unprecedented levels. The region was undergoing radical changes, and Armenians of all backgrounds and concerns were directly impacted. The Armenian condition changed drastically. The period of two hundred years produced new paradigms in a vast amount of new historical material, which will inevitably upturn conventional criteria of puristic identity and/or ideology.

As far as the Armenians were concerned, these changes resulted in the creation of a new habitat in the heart of the Islamic world. Already as of the later tenth century, there were Armenian communities in the valley of the Orontes River, Cilicia, the Euphrates River, around the Tigris River, al-Jazīrah, Upper Mesopotamia, the entire al-Shām, Palestine, Egypt, and further west. In view of this expansion, so to speak, the link between the north and south, east and west, or between the different parts of the Armenian habitat should be made and has not been done.

This can only be achieved by first a holistic approach and second by looking at both the habitat and the period as a singularity in Near Eastern and Armenian history. In other words, what I call the Paradigm of Habitat has central significance, both then and during later periods in Armenian history. The classic division between “Fatherland” and “Diaspora” is very simplistic and has no historical grounding.

There is the most interesting issue of social and class evolution during this period. The new lords of the Armenian communities and enclaves/powers in the midst of the Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, and soon the Crusaders did not come from the nobility but from military and heterodox backgrounds. In other words, the change of habitat and surely political and economic circumstances caused sudden changes in social and class evolution. Parallel to the weakening of the Church and traditional nobility, new political cultures and manners of interaction with both the Muslims and the other Christians emerged. However, throughout, Armenian political life did not stagnate. On the contrary, there occurred a fragmentation and a breakdown of Armenian political–cultural energy into more dynamic patterns and new institutions. Power was

distributed, and the militant Paulician–T'ondrakian “outlaws” and “bandits” as well as the remnants of the cavalry or the freemen (*azats*) of the nobles had a good share.

Some of the least noticed aspects of this phase were the questions of legitimacy and identity. As extra-establishment and heterodox factions and figures acquired significant roles in Near Eastern politics, legitimacy became a relative matter, as pointed out throughout this text. Furthermore, dichotomies between orthodoxy and heresy blurred, because the institutions that defined these lines receded, and some were dismantled. New alliances were made with all sorts of Christian and Muslim sides. Transitions into other religious–political cultures were inevitable as well as beneficial. Alongside orthodox Armenians, there were Latin and Chalcedonian Armenians, just as there were Muslim and heterodox Armenians. Traditionally considered a paradigm of sorts and invested on, the question of Armenian identity in the context of these circumstances will confuse even the most dogmatic of scholars.

Another major development during these two centuries is what I call the Medieval Armenian Diaspora. It was a new condition that evolved and grew as a new and permanent social–political–cultural condition of Armenians at both the regional and, eventually, the international stages. As of this period and for the past millennium, the majority of Armenians do not live on the native land; they are practically natives/citizens of the locations they live in. Not only what is known as the six (or seven) Armenian *Vilayets* (provinces) in eastern Ottoman Turkey were/are a part of the new Armenian habitat, but also Cilicia, Syria, some of Mesopotamia, and Egypt as well. Many aspects of the modern Armenian condition are simply continuations of this period and should be studied in these contexts. Genocide is not the only reference to understand and explain the so-called modern Armenian diaspora. Having said this, a parenthesis is in order at this point about things diasporic that are so much a part of contemporary Armenian literary and intellectual culture. Even though there is a very large time gap of seven to eight centuries, the critique of “things diasporic” that have been taken for granted should be reconsidered in more historic frameworks. There is another problem: Already in circulation for a long time, the concept of “diasporic identity” presupposes a distinction between two types of Armenian identity, each peculiar to a different type of experience—one “on a/the native land” and another “in dispersion/outside the native land.” In both cases, abstractions are made about these “identities” as related or not, to a/the native land. As in the case of

most abstractions, we only seem to understand the exact connotation of and differences between these types of identities and related concepts, not because of their clarity, but precisely due to their ambiguity and emotional underpinnings. Even though mobility, fragmentation, and decentralization marked Armenian history at least for the last millennium and earlier as well, the “diaspora” or the *Sp’iwirk’* (in fact a legacy of Soviet Armenia—1921 to 1991—and the Cold War) and subtopics of immigrant communities are still extremely complex and poorly studied subjects. There is another problem: The literary record about this new diaspora is heavily laden with the tragic/heroic and death/resurrection motifs of the massacres that marked Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire from 1878 to the 1920s, including the Genocide during World War I. In other words, the concept is dangerously preconceptualized in dramatic and melodramatic terms. Centuries-old patterns of life and involvement on a vast Armenian *oikoumenē*, of which the “native” land was a fraction, have been overshadowed and almost forgotten. On these grounds, the present Diaspora—rather, the life of Armenians in dispersion—is a cluster of expanding/shrinking communities throughout the world. Just as in the past, the factors in its evolution are local, economic–political, and have little to do with clear-cut ideologies of identity. There are surely an infinite number of issues involved in this condition, but only a few concepts are forced under stereotyped categories, such as *hayapahpanum* or *azgapahpanum* (preservation of Armenians or preservation of the nation), survival through memory (now based solidly on the Genocide), oral history (focusing mainly on survivors), supporting the Republic of Armenia independent once again, and surely Karabagh. During the early decades of the past century, when thousands of refugees settled in Arab countries, mostly mundane diasporan problems—such as schools, churches, associations, funds, poverty, prosperity, and so on—were dealt with in an extraordinary simplicity by both first- and second-generation survivors. I have the vivid examples of my ancestors and extended family, all remnants from both the east and west of the Armenian world in Asia Minor and further east in Iran. For these communities, the “homeland” or the *erkir* (country) was essentially the historic Armenian habitat, or the native land, which also included the Vilayets, Cilicia, and much more. It is not a definite “fatherland” (*hayrenik’*) with clearly drawn borders. This was the nature of Armenian expansion, and they were natives in all places. The question is much bigger than a homeland; it is a human rights issue and recorded history. This book stops at the early fifteenth century;

however, a comment is in order at this point. In modern history, and as of the 1860s, earlier also waves of migrations, forced evacuations, and massacres drove thousands of people into the Arab Middle East, and some into Europe and North America. Already the Arab countries were parts of the Armenian habitat for more than a millennium. This is the reason why the Armenians in these countries were welcome, looked upon, and saw themselves as “natives”—even when they were occasionally segregated against. They were given protection and citizenship and managed to evolve and prosper through very intricate manners of interacting with the environment, none of which were tragic or isolationist. The Prologue of the book, also included in this volume, briefly touches upon these issues. The record of literature and the arts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was always and inevitably nationalist, because the period marked the awakening of national consciousness and a culture amid extremely difficult circumstances. However, the Armenian experience in the Islamic world goes back many centuries and the context is the broader history, not just the Ottoman, Tsarist, and Iranian periods. Although the arts are very important to understand a period, they cannot be misunderstood for histories. New sources and testimonies, new paradigms should be probed for a fresh social history of Armenians. The Genocide is surely a major paradigm, but not the only one. In sum, the medieval and modern phases of Armenian history in the Near East are parts of a continuum and should be approached with a naked eye and independent of the narrow formats of the traditional rhetoric. Anyone who studies the social–cultural life of Armenians in pre- and post-Ottoman Asia Minor, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and other countries of the region immediately perceives a peculiar sort of cultural–political energy, which sustained and oriented the processes even beyond the region into Europe and west of the Atlantic. Without a critical understanding of the historic factors that led to modern conditions, discussions about the so-called Diaspora may be limited.

During the *Intermezzo* of two centuries, there was another change as well, much before the final partition of the Armenian world into eastern and western parts between Safavid Iran and Ottoman Turkey (in 1639, by the Treaty of Zuhab). I argue that already by the end of the twelfth century, there were distinct eastern and western Armenian worlds. Differences in the folklore, political, and religious cultures became conspicuous during the Cilician world. Gradually, two worlds and cultures developed by the necessities of different circumstances,

enriching Armenian history and the people. Radical changes during the eleventh century, in particular, had a bright side. In the 1030s, when the Turkic tribes began appearing in eastern Asia Minor, the population of the cities was at least partly and often mostly Armenian. I argue that these seemingly cataclysmic developments caused the rapid urbanization of the Armenians, their exposure to other peoples, and the enrichment of the culture. In a relatively short time, new urban social classes developed. There were landowners, merchants, people of learning, craftsmen, entertainers, artists, and so on. Life in the newly developing cosmopolitan cities is another paradigm.

One of the many ironies of Near Eastern and Armenian history is that during the tenth century and the next ones, the masterminds, instruments, and the victims of Byzantine politics were often Armenian. The other side of the irony was that in most operations against the Armenians and campaigns on the Muslim side during the tenth century, there were many Armenians who were not only in Byzantine armies but also on the Muslim side of the borders. A major factor in the sudden proliferation of territorial lordships and warlords was the availability of large heterodox factions and individuals—mostly known as bandits, brigands, and outlaws—at large in the region at that time. These social types constituted their power base, as I try to demonstrate by specific cases.

This is the background of extra-establishment Armenian power in Asia Minor, al-Shām, and Egypt. For example, perhaps for the first time, I discovered that the brigands of the Bēnē Ghazarik (mentioned by Michael the Syrian), the T'ondrakian clan of the “Red Dog Łazar” driven away by Grigor Magistros (around 1054), allied with the renegade Philaretus and eventually became the masters of Sewawerak in the region of the Euphrates. There are more such cases. When the Ghuzz and the Seljuks began their expansion, many militant heterodox groups joined them, converted to Islam, and enrolled in the campaign, gaining both power and territories of their own. Philaretus, the Dānishmandids, the Nāwīkīs, and the Banū Boghusaks are just paradigmatic cases in support of Armenian–Turkish realpolitik.

During these two centuries, Armenian–Muslim realpolitik stood in direct contradiction to the commonly adopted and implemented paradigms in Armenian and Near Eastern historiography. The Muslim–Armenian powers that appeared at this time present a radically different image of both the period and the Armenian experience with Islam. Based purely on practical considerations of survival and power,

the realpolitik of these Armenians generated unprecedented models of political culture, vision, flexibility, and mechanisms of survival on non-native lands and among peoples of different faiths and cultures.

The record of history is bound to put question marks on mainstream narratives. I modestly claim to have outlined the background and historicity of at least five Muslim Armenian powers between 1060 and 1080 as essential phenomena for Armenian and Near Eastern histories. They were the Dānishmandids, the Banū Boghusaks, the “state” of Philaretus, the Nāwīqīs/Awāqīs, and the Fāṭimid Armenians. The emergence of the Rubenid Barony in Cilicia comes in this context and should be reviewed accordingly. As Cahen said, “never before had the Armenians played such a great part in the history of the Near East as they did at this time.”

As already mentioned, Armenian–Turkish realpolitik was an aspect of this phase. The Dānishmandids in Cappadocia—1055/447H–1173/569H—were referred to as Turks, even though their Armenian background was common knowledge. The Nāwīkīs, also known as the *Clan of Awag* (or Awak), were Ghuzz, Philaretus was an ally of the Turks and Kurds in this region and indeed converted. The case of the Banū Boghusaks is similar. Despite these clear-cut cases, even some very credible scholars, such as Cahen, find it hard to accept the Armenian background of the Dānishmandids, for example. The problem comes from the application of modern criteria of ethnicity and nationalism to medieval cases. Ethnicity cannot be taken as a paradigm; religion also was a means to power. Political Islam superseded and absorbed these criteria. Cahen himself admits his failure to explain the mixed Christian and Muslim representations on Dānishmandid coins. What stronger proof does one need about the “twin-born” nature of these times and societies? Syncretism was indigenous to the region, as discussed in Volume One and other contexts in this book. Social–religious inconformity—often labeled as heresy—was another characteristic of the cultures of an already syncretistic region. Mysticism was another form of religious and social dissidence. These choices in different communities inevitably created mutual sympathies between the Armenian sects and Muslims, including their heterodox trends, sects as of the eighth century. This was the case of the Paulicians and T’ondrakians, and their connections with the Babakians, and later on, Irano-Islamic and Ismā’īlīs.

The Armenian period in Fāṭimid Egypt, the subject of Chapter 3, was practically excavated from Arab sources. One of the intriguing

aspects of this episode was the simultaneous involvement of both the Armenian establishment and heterodox and Muslim Armenians there. In other words, there were cases on both sides and an excellent opportunity for a comparative analysis. Were it not for the “orthodox” interval of Pahlawuni Bahrām’s two-year vizierate, it would have been harder to trace and compare two opposed levels/styles of Armenian interaction with Islam.

Before the Armenian Period in Egypt, the career of the Muslim Armenian Amīr ‘Azīz al-Dawlah, the Fāṭimid governor of Aleppo, was another discovery. I also suggested that the beginnings of Badr al-Jamālī were, in fact, in Aleppo, and surely he was among many in north Syria at the time. He was the Armenian ghulām Abū’l-Najm Badr, who was responsible for the murder of his master ‘Azīz in 1022. The vizierate of Badr al-Jamālī (1074–1094) and earlier on, his career as Fāṭimid governor in al-Shām initiated Armenian–Turkish rivalry for power. It became an aspect of the last century of Fāṭimid history. The Seljuks never gave up attempts to dominate Egypt, but as long as the Armenians were in power, the caliphate survived, and the Turks as well as the Franks were kept out of Egypt. With the assassination of the last Armenian vizier Ruzzīk, the mixed Kurdish–Turkish contenders for power penetrated the administration and put an end to the Fāṭimid Caliphate even before its demise in 1171. The religious loyalties and politics of Badr and the other viziers are other peculiar aspects of their personalities and careers. In general, the manners in which he, an Ismā’īlī; his son al-Afḍal, a Sunnī sympathizer; his grandson Kutayfāt, an Imāmī; and the Nuṣayrī Ruzzīks dealt with and manipulated Islam were extremely complex. Conservative scholars are of the opinion that the absence of minimal requirements of language and faith cancels the “Armenianness” of the Fāṭimid Armenians. However, the fact that Arab historians, even contemporary scholars, refer to these figures and factions as “Armenians” proves that their ethnic background was and still is the only requirement to be called such, at least as far as these historians are concerned.

There is also the peculiarity of heterodox religious cultures. These men were no doubt deeply spiritual people, but their religious zeal always lacked dogma. This was a major yet misunderstood aspect of Armenian heterodox spirituality. It meant and required a dismissal of all dogma and religious morality, except the belief in one, all-powerful, and just God. The only commandment they accepted was that of love, which they interpreted as being both physical and spiritual, but, more

importantly, as an equalizing factor. The point I make in this regard is that irrespective of their declared loyalties to different trends in Islam (Ismā'īlī, Shī'ī, Sunnī, and Imāmī), the Armenian identity of the heterodox and Muslim Armenians was granted by both, themselves and their environment. It is not difficult to see that these perceptions of ethnicity and national identity pose a challenge to the more common concepts of "Armenianness" based on the classic loyalties of faith and language that serve as preconditions.

As we study Fātimid history of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, we notice a very basic difference in the way in which the Armenians, Seljuks, and Kurds approached the new locations they settled in. The Seljuks regarded the entire region from al-Shām to Egypt as a land to be conquered and its people to be subjugated, whereas the Armenians worked for the re-enforcement of the existing structures not as invaders but as immigrants with a natural interest in their maintenance and improvement. No complaint of any sort was ever recorded against the communities. The Jamālīs, their troops, the Ruzzīks, and their men were lavishly praised for their contribution and just rule by most medieval Muslim sources, both medieval and modern. Even Yānis al-Armanī, the most modest among the viziers, was held in high esteem. The case of Bahrām was indeed a counter-paradigm, an anticlimax. Irrespective of their motives, the internal policies of these figures proved to be more beneficial for the caliphate itself and more altruistic in its consequences than any other socio-military faction could ever realize. The last section of this chapter takes up what I call the testimony of the architecture initiated and often built by the Armenians.

Chapter 4 on diverging paradigms during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries focuses on the case of Cilicia. The tenth century was known as the "Age of Kingdoms" on the historic land by the traditional nobility, whereas the eleventh and twelfth centuries were a period of Muslim–Armenian realpolitik and power by military people, not from the nobility and heterodox factions outside the historic land. Soon circumstances led to what I call a "Dynastic Triangle" that appeared both on the native land and outside it during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this time by a lesser but "orthodox" nobility. In these three locations, the patterns of Armenian interaction with both the Christians and Muslims took extreme and divergent forms. Only a holistic approach—as applied in this study—can detect and trace the peculiarities of this period without distorting it. Furthermore, contrary to common opinion, during the twelfth century, an Armeno–Turkish

and generally an Armeno–Muslim community developed in Asia Minor, lower Mesopotamia, Egypt, al-Shām, and lower Mesopotamia. It was very common to find Christian ancestry and relations among the higher-ranking figures of all ethnicities. Similar to the Arab tribal amīrs earlier on, the Shah-i-Armans and the Seljuks married Armenian ladies of the nobility. These Muslims absorbed and consciously adapted many aspects of life, arts, architecture, and folklore from the Armenians and the Greeks in the midst of whom they settled. Fātimid architecture was Armenianized through Armenian builders, just as Seljuk architecture was. Under both the Seljuks and the Mongols, the Armenian Church was still in a relatively good condition; even after the conversion of the Mongols around the 1300s, the Armenian culture and monastic institutions prospered.

Cilicia as a paradigm between the east and the west is the focus of Chapters 4 and 5. The phenomenon was a part of the Armenian Intermezzo. When a few years before the end of the eleventh century, the Crusaders appeared in the region finding natural allies in them, the Armenians in Cilicia allied with them. Much later, they saw interest in the alliance with the non-Muslim Mongols, whose subjects they became anyway, indirectly at least. This time around, their participation in the Mongol invasions into Muslim territories gained them further animosity.

I suggested that as an introduction to the study of the case of Cilicia, four points should be remembered about the Armenian condition at the time: the creation of a Christian-crusader style politics by Byzantines in the 970s; the motif of the “sword and cross”; the status of Cilicia as a “replacement” for the native homeland lost to the Byzantines; and the “diasporic” context of all things Cilician. The resumption of life in new circumstances and contact with western cultures drastically “modernized” Armenian political and intellectual culture. Almost immediately, deep differences in outlook and practice developed between western and eastern Armenians or the Cilicians in the west and the Armenians in the east. In general, diverging paradigms of interaction with Muslims as well as Latins characterized this period. Many details and episodes in this chapter provide grounds for this observation. One of these is the contrast between two Armenian projects in Cilicia and at the hands of Rubenid princes: the project of a Latin–Armenian kingdom and Prince Mleh’s counter-project of a Zankī–Armenian kingdom. Already married to a lady from the Nāwīkī/Yāruqī clan, he was also connected to a militant Ghuzz faction of Georgian–Armenian background.

Exactly hundred years after Philaretus, Mleh's was a second yet bolder experiment in view of heavy Frankish and Byzantine presence in the region. Putting a final end to Byzantine and Crusader involvement in coastal Cilicia, Mleh stood in direct contradiction to the pro-Latin Rubenid-Het'umid project.

There is another seemingly minor issue involved in the case of Mleh. In 1071/567H, while Cilicia was in precarious circumstances, Caliph al-Ādid, the last Fāṭimid Caliph, was assassinated, and the Ayyūbids initiated anti-Armenian persecutions. Many Armenians moved to Cilicia, now under pro-Muslim Mleh. Tens of thousands settled there, because Cilicia was the closest safe haven for them. It did not matter who ruled there. Just as in the past, fleeing before the Seljuks, many migrated to Fāṭimid Egypt where a powerful Muslim Armenian, Badr, was in control. Earlier on, in the north, another "renegade" Philaretus provided a safe haven to his compatriots. It should also be noticed that this time, all three Armenian territories of the thirteenth century, Cilicia, Siwnik', and Erzuka, were under Mongol rule. In other words, most Armenians were the auxiliaries of the Mongols against the Muslims. The situation changed as of 1300, but still, this is an aspect of Armenian history at the time that, in turn, seems to be marginalized.

The relationship between Armenian political evolution in the Islamic world and Armenian persistence is another intriguing yet understudied theme. The project of the Latin-Armenian Kingdom and Byzantine pressures for church union, in a sense, "modernized" the Catholicosate in Cilicia and empowered it along ecumenical lines. The schism and the final break in 1441 should be reevaluated in these terms and not in narrow medieval as well as contemporary claims. The titanic figure of Nersēs Lambronac'i and his legacy are yet to be appreciated. It was Cilician pragmatism and openness to new ideas and perspectives that were responsible for the Silver Age of Armenian culture in the twelfth century. A renaissance of sorts began in Cilicia but under the circumstances, it stood no chance. The Cilician condition between the east and the west had the seeds of both conflict and enrichment, and Cilician intellectual culture absorbed both. The Silver Age took shape amid conflict and rivalries and in response to them, it was ecumenical, pragmatic, tolerant, and vibrant. West Armenian culture developed on these bases and was and is still distinguished by these traits. The legacies of major tenth-century figures, such as Narekac'i, Magistros, and Imastasēr, were understood and implemented in Cilicia. In fact, one can understand the tenth century by looking into the thought and

literature of Cilician figures such as Martyrophil, Grigor III, Šnorhali, Lambronac'i, Grigor IV Tlay, and Roslyn. I argued that the philosophical legacy derived from all the aspects of the literature and the arts qualify Cilician culture to be the single-most significant Near Eastern equivalent of the European Late Gothic and Proto-Renaissance phases. A comparison between the *Matean* of Narekac'i and Dante's *Divine Comedy* (written three centuries later) reveals surprising similarities.

Summary: The Arguments in Volume Three

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were politically the most diverse, socially the most open, and culturally the most advanced periods of medieval Armenian history. By the beginning of the fifteenth century an era seemed to have come to an end. As discussed in Volume Two as well, during the entire Middle Ages very advanced levels of cultural contacts and interactions happened both with the Christian West and Muslim East. The proofs are unique periods of cultural awakening in the Armenian Triangle between Cilicia, Erznka, and Siwnik' from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. During this period, with the exception of the Georgians on the peripheries of the Islamic world, Armenians were the only Christian people in the Near East, who lived in the midst of Muslims and managed to maintain some autonomy, political, and religious institutions and a role in the region. They spread between the three seas—Black, Caspian, Mediterranean—in the midst of Mongols, Crusaders, and rival Muslim peoples such as the Seljuk Turks, Turkmens, Mamlüks, Arabs, and the Mongols (after 1300). They entered into all sorts of alliances and conflicts, and suffered the consequences.

This volume focused on the more social-cultural aspects of interactions during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with a focus on a political reading of all themes and related texts. Part One took the paradigm of cosmopolitanism in the case of Erznka, a major regional urban center and the most ancient Armenian city in the northwest of the Armenian world. Part One of this volume dealt with totally new aspects of very close encounters in and because of urban-cosmopolitan environments in Erznka during the thirteenth century. My discovery of the Islamic sources of two texts and great similarities between the culture, folklore, and poetry of urban societies of different ethnic-religious backgrounds established the main argument of the book, that

all things Armenian were/are also things Near Eastern and must be re-considered in this light. During these two centuries drastic changes happened in Armenian society and they still await fresh and interdisciplinary research. Almost totally dependent on the Church and clergy, the literature and histories of the Mongol period occasionally and indirectly revealed these developments and realities on the ground, but in negative terms.

The proof that the *Views* of Yovhannēs Erznkac’i was in fact a summary—by a beginner—of the *Rasā’il*, tenth century esoteric Epistles of the Ismā’īli Brethren of Purity in Baṣrah, provided solid grounds for my arguments concerning the Armenian-Irano-Islamic and Ismā’īli connections in particular (as of the ninth century). Even though Armenian-Islamic links were explicit and more direct through the heterodox channels, as demonstrated, they were active on all layers of society as well. In general, the few histories of the city of Erznka seem to ignore the fact that for Armenians at least, Erznka was a wide gateway to and from Islamic culture. What was achieved there was very significant yet most probably not unique. The cases of the other cities with Armenian populations must be studied one by one. On the popular level, and as per non-Armenian sources as well, intermarriages and friendships, even conversions seemed to be common phenomena everywhere. The dialect, popular poetry, crafts, and folklore of Erznka indicate to very close links. Furthermore, it was in Erznka again, that Caliph al-Nāṣir’s Futuwwa reform project and literature was adopted and implemented to the end of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated in Chapter 3 of Part One.

As discussed, the distinguishing traits of urban youth coalitions were neither their ethnicity, faith, and location, nor the purity or the impurity of their morals and conduct. Their social-cultural role was the most intriguing and peculiar yet least studied aspect. Often described as hedonistic and chaotic young men—which they were in fact—both by Armenian and Islamic authors, the folklore of these youth lay the grounds for the secular culture of the urban lower and middle classes in the entire Near East. Because of their popular and grass-root nature and broad base, youth coalitions created a new literary and artistic artworld, fresh tastes, and large audiences. Armenians were part of these developments and naturally actors in the processes. Similar circumstances in the medieval cities—mostly under Muslim rule—were proper environments for this forceful social-cultural evolution which superseded and reduced religious and ethnic dichotomies. Amidst

social-political decentralization, the urban majority of modest means found its way both into the culture and social structures carving a position and shaping identities. The Armenian nationalist paradigm, also the paradigm of “homeland” and sovereignty/the absence of it, in studying the medieval will not only miss the target but also distort the accounts, as it has. Often caught in the tensions of unstable resources and an uncertain future, the need for entertainment and self-expression as a class marked the lifestyle of urban youth. Song, poetry, dance, drinking and feasting, and the love of women/men constituted their folklore. The point I am strongly suggesting is that even though deeply spiritual, this culture was primarily secular and extra-ethnic. Medieval Armenian poetry stands as proof. Parallel to the clergy, the ruling/military, and merchant classes in mostly cosmopolitan cities, a modest but very large layer of society grew in size and significance and generated its own aesthetics and exigencies.

Concerned about their control over these developments, political and religious institutions often expressed their displeasure toward the rebellious, wild, and vulgar character of these arts and entertainment, which they were indeed. Accusations of hedonism and heresy missed the mark and failed to subdue these developments, because urban cosmopolitan popular cultures were parts of the evolution of cosmopolitan societies. The *fityān*, *manuks*, and the *akhīs* were vehicles in this process, just like the dissident sectarians were before them. In fact, Armenian youth coalitions of later ages were put in charge—by the Church—of providing entertainment at festivals. Popular epics, parables, song cycles, and arts are all that is left of these stages of evolution in the entire region. Against the background of political and demographic change, the task at hand is to find new paradigms to understand social and cultural evolution during these times.

The locale of Part Two is Siwnik'. The subject is the long overdue subject of the images and conceptualization of Islam in medieval Armenian literary tradition. The basic argument of this part is that the channels to doctrinal Islam were heterodoxy and the medieval Armenian sects or heresies. The literary-intellectual culture however, almost totally depended on a dynamic cycle of legends (*araspel*) about the life and stories of a certain Mahmet from the deep desert. In its evolution as of the seventh century, this cycle combined several elements, such as the Karshuni in Armenian translation and versions, some historical data, and the perspectives/objectives of individual authors. There is no record or indication in the literature as well as the folklore, that

the Qurʾān was read in Arabic or in translation, with the exception of the heterodox Armenians and naturally the converts. I observed that the paradigm of heterodoxy as a channel applied in this case too. Only the Paulicians and Tʾondrakians (and naturally the Muslim Armenians) seem to have read the Qurʾān, in addition to their own “gospels.”

By the beginning of the fifteenth century and at the end of an era, polemical treatises by two authors from the monastic school of Tatʾew in Siwnikʾ summed up the entire Cycle of Mahmet legends, the material from the Karshuni, all accounts about Islam and its founder, and surely the polemical arsenal of Arab and Latin Christian authors. The initiative was overdue. On the ground, while the illiterate and oppressed rural communities struggled with whatever means that were accessible, city dwellers, mostly under Muslim control, had their concerns, and everywhere conversions were easy transitions. Indifference toward the Church and amoralizing faith were probably more common ways of avoiding both. As we read these polemical texts carefully, we realize that cultural Islam is what really concerned these authors.

There is another issue that is not explicit in these texts but indicates to very intriguing aspects of Armenian Christianity at that junction. Grigor defined heresy in the triangle of reason, social norms, and orthodoxy. In his opinion, the Neṛ or Antichrist (a term used for the Prophet too) was also a radical rationalist, who refused to accept and adopt what he found contrary to his reason and understanding. The view summarizes over a millennium of debate and conflict between the Church and dissident factions. These texts also made it explicit that at the end of the fourteenth century, even though Islam was still considered and dismissed as a variant of Arianism, the Church realized that it had to deal with it as an overwhelming “world” and find terms of reconciliation and coexistence. Almost in desperation, Grigor resorted to the supreme authority and commitment of the Prophet in his alleged *Great Manšūr*, and observed that the “newly found fanaticism” of some Muslims had no justification in the Prophet’s politics. He also reminded that the prophetic oath was reconfirmed by his successors. His initiative was political and these texts must also be read in historic perspectives and not just theological. Both Grigor and Mattēos considered “sound knowledge” and “rational” debate as “weapons” against adversaries and the “others.” There can be no doubt that the context and objectives were neither theological nor routine teaching. In fact all the primary texts under study in this volume must also be read and reevaluated as images

of circumstances of Armenians among Muslim peoples and their rule during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Circumstances changed, and the next phase was very different in every respect and this study had to end at this point. Begun exactly two decades ago in 1993 (while I was doing my initial readings at my father's bedside at the AUB Hospital), this trilogy focused on the Armenian experience in the medieval Near East during the millennium from the fourth to the fourteenth century. Through its perspectives and methodology, it was designed to suggest novel processes of revaluation and re-conceptualization both in Armenian and Near Eastern studies. The paradigms presented in the three volumes were counter-cases and as such arguments against circulating narratives and more importantly against fixities in mainstream philosophies and epistemologies of Armenian history. They should also stimulate an overdue review of Armenian history in its Near Eastern context. Radical changes on all these levels are as much projects for academics as they are paths to bolder and more creative ways of looking at things Armenian in whatever discipline, career, condition, and location Armenians find themselves. I believe that this dynamic exercise will perpetuate itself existentially in newer and more dynamic ways of historical awareness on individual and collective levels, and only then better history will be written by generations to come. This opus was just a beginning.

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